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THE STATE OF OPERA



Special Film Issue



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Oz Peer Gynt**



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HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

Directed by
WILLIAM GASKILL

Designed by
HAYDEN GRIFFIN

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(in alphabetical order)

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BRANDON BURKE
STUART CAMPBELL
JOHN CLAYTON
RALPH COTTERILL
PETER COUSENS
MAX CULLEN
DIANA DAVIDSON
KATE FITZPATRICK
JOHN GADEN
ALEXANDER HAY
NONI HAZLEHURST
LAWRENCE HELD
NEIL REDFERN
GEORGE SPARTELS
ANDREW TIGHE
and
COLIN FRIELS as Hamlet



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE Drama Theatre
March 28 to May 9

Theatre Australia

VOLUME 5, No. 2

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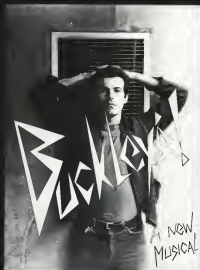
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STATE THEATRE COMPANY of south australia



APRIL 4-25 PLAYHOUSE

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Australian Drama Festival

COMMENT



BY
ROBERT
PAGE

Australian Drama Festival

This month Adelaide's "other" festival festival takes place, the Australian Drama Festival. Although this is only its second showing the success of the first in 1979 and the scale of this year's is enough to make it a major event in the theatre calendar and not an insignificant alternative to the Adelaide Festival of the Arts.

The raison d'être of the first ADF was proclaimed by Max Wearing, its then Chairman, to be "to celebrate the emergence of indigenous Australian drama and to foster its development, and because we want to emphasise the continuities in our drama tradition." The first half of the statement may have been a little dated even then — like colour television in Australia, indigenous drama when it got going took off swiftly and never looked back — but the latter part stands as a good description of the 1980 programme. As well as the dozen world premieres of new Australian works and later's dozen of South Australian premieres, the productions include golden oldies like *Sweeney* Of *The Swainsboro*, *Dad And The Big Men* *Ph* and Neil Patrick's *Tea Set*, as well as Roger Palmer's translation of Whitman's *The Two Men* and *Col* and Peter Barclay and Ken Molloy's adaptation of Joseph Parry's novel *Such Is Life*.

If our drama no longer requires the force feeding or careful watering it did ten, or even five, years ago, there is no reason not to celebrate its continuing well-being. The strength of ADF lies not in the need for drama, but in the interest it attracts and the scope it can provide. Now there is so much wide-ranging activity taking place all over our far-flung continent — not only in the capital cities but in the suburbs and the regions too — it is highly desirable that there should be such an ongoing opportunity for exchange of work, development and ideas.

In its first year ADF's programme comprised almost entirely fringe and amateur groups and its status as a representative festival was questionable; this time it has a far greater number of major companies, including the APG, La Brea, the Riverina Theatre Company, Foothills Gallery, the State Theatre Company of SA, Mudgee

Troupe and the Stage Company. If the state companies outside South Australia are not participating it is only due to the problems of short lead-time and cost. As Festival Co-ordinator Christopher Jones said "It was not lack of interest — just one of planning. I came in fairly late. It costs a lot to move a production and out from one city to another, especially at short notice." As ADF increases in budget and experience it will doubtless come to represent Australian theatre at all levels.

Whatever its growth, though, the Festival must so preserve a very different image to that of its big brother, it seems to avoid the "elitist label" and place its programme to cater for a wide variety of tastes and its ticket prices 10 times within the range of most pockets.

Yet its non-theatrical activities follow a tried and tested format. A day long forum session on Easter Sunday includes discussion topics "Yeah, but wouldn't do for a real job", "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow", and "The smell of the crowd" with speakers such as Gwyneth Handford, Leonard Rodin, John Pinder, Ruth Cracknell (and even years truly) Types of the 1979 Festival Forum will be played by Radio 50V on four Monday nights as a prelude to this. Another discussion, entitled "The Great Debate" will be held on April 8 when leading politicians and arts representatives will thrash out Government Arts Policy.

Drama in other media includes three radio plays, which evolved from a radio drama workshop held by the Association of Community Theatres, being broadcast for the Festival by Radio 5 MIM and a week-long Australian Movie Festival at the Capitol Cinema. This will be showing some of the major successes of the past couple of years as well as *Caddy*, *Ph* and *Wings*, *Raid* and the classic *Dad And Dave Come To Town* and *On Our Selection* — all in the interests of the policy of reflecting continuity. This will also be served by the Performing Arts Collection's audio-visual survey of the history of broadcasting and radio drama in Australia in which can be heard Roy Rene, Jack Dancy, Rod Taylor as Tarzan, Leonard Teale as Saperstein, some of the world's longest running serial, *Dr Paul*, and the vibrant *Portia in Portia's Life*.

Again from the 44 theatre companies and the 320-odd performers they will be giving, the second Australian Drama Festival shows every indication of being the engaging and extensive event its promoters expect. Its wide-ranging definition of things dramatic should give it broad appeal and prove its value as a true celebration of Australian dramatic development.

THEATRE AUSTRALIA

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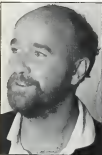
PRAM FACTORY BACK IN BUSINESS

The Pram Factory went through a low phase last year with its backing being questioned from under it and the new Ensemble failing to inject new life into production. This year it seems all set to take off again, and, in a new document distributed by Thorburn, State Public Relations and Marketing Consultants, says it will be "promoting to theatre goers a completely new dimension in innovative and experimental theatre". All this will be under the leadership of the last original member of the APG collective, John Timlin.

The major thrust of work is the Directors' Programme which will help five directors mount projects of their choice and the five picked have in common a concern with exploring the possibilities of unusual texts. The first two, Roger Pevensy and David Kendall have opened their productions, yet to come are Richard Mather's *Beating Celebration* by John Bay, Val Korian's further work on dramatising her own novel *The Art of Lying* Whiting and film-maker Peter Friedrich's *Armad at Andes*.

The Pram has Tim Robertson as writer-in-residence, will be raising another playwriting competition and has a series of Sunday afternoon performances and play readings in the Back Theatre.

The Australia Council Theatre Board



Val Korian — APG artistic producer

has granted the Pram \$70,000 for the first half of '81, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts has increased the Group's subsidy to \$105,000 this year and the Legislature Board is making commitments of \$5,000 to the writing projects.

SORRY MAXINE

I feel beholden to point out on behalf of Gordon Chater, who was enormously appreciative of her efficiency, artistic sensibility and goodwill, that Maxine Le Guen was the stage manager for the production of *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* throughout Australia as well as London, San Francisco and the New York opening, not Marge Wright as reported in your February issue of *Theatre Australia*. Richard Wherrett.

MTC MOVES TO SPONSORSHIP

The Melbourne Theatre Company is appealing to business organisations for money to help maintain its present level of production and professionalism as government subsidies are not keeping pace with inflation. In 1981 the MTC is receiving \$720,000 from the Australia Council and \$430,000 from the Victorian State Government. While the federal grant is up \$51,000 from 1980 the state subsidy has remained the same.

The Melbourne Theatre Company operates three performing spaces and it will also occupy the Playhouse Theatre when the Victorian Arts Centre on St Kilda Road is completed for 40 weeks of the year, which will further stretch the company's resources.

Companies are being asked to sponsor individual plays by paying \$62,000, for which they will receive certain advantages such as credits in MTC advertising, space in programmes and book theatre booklets. Because the MTC considers its financial situation to be extremely anxious it has employed a consultant to elicit support from private enterprise. Sponsorship kits are being sent to 150 major companies with offices in Melbourne.

MTC director, John Sumner said "Our subsidies are falling further and further behind our requirements. We are Australia's leading theatre company in terms of the number of productions we present a year, the number of people we employ and the number of seats we sell. Yet in 1981 subsidies will only make up about 36 percent of our projected total



John Sumner

income, compared with 46 percent five years ago."

Perhaps the MTC will be the pain-sector in an area that has long been neglected in Australia. While there is some support for opera and a little for dance from the private sector, theatre has only reserved drabs and drabs, and it's time some serious effort was put into convincing Australian and Australian-based companies that supporting culture is at least as worthwhile as supporting sport.

DONALD SMITH RETIRES

The world famous Australian actor, Donald Smith OBE, has retired from the operatic stage and the Australian Opera. Mr Smith's letter of Friday February 13 to

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the AO says his retirement is for health and personal reasons and it also acknowledges his current unseemable and rewarding relationship and long association with the company. The AO's Musical Director, Richard Boryngie and the Board paid tribute to the great contribution Donald Smith has made to the growth and popularisation of opera in Australia and the Australian Opera in particular over the past 35 years.

His retirement is sudden and immediate, resulting in cast changes in a number of works, particularly *I Masnadieri*, which Donald Smith made so successful. The Italian tenor Angelo Marconi is making guest appearances with the AO in the role of Carlo in *I Masnadieri*, he stepped into the role as very short notice, undertaking to learn it in only three weeks as well as carrying out the necessary rehearsals for rehearsing the opera in Canberra and Adelaide. Marconi carried a scratch role in January and February at the Sydney Opera House when he made his Australian Debut as Verdi's Otello, alongside Juan Sutherland as Desdemona.

NEW DRAMA BOOK LAUNCHED

The Melbourne launching of Carriery Press's latest book, *Contemporary Australian Drama* was held on February 19 at the Palace Theatre. Ex-Governor General Sir Paul Hasluck KG, GCMG, GCVO, K St J made the journey from Perth to launch the 300-page collection of dramatic criticism.

The book is a unique collection of the best work in the field since 1955, its 40 contributors include Katherine Brashear, R. F. Brinsford, Bruce Grant, Dorothy Hewitt, Jack Hibbard, Geoffrey Hutton, H G Kippax and Margaret Williams.

Sir Paul himself is the author of twelve books of history, poetry and studies in Australian political administration, the latest of which is *Diplomatic Witness* (1980), a frank account of his experiences in the Department of External Affairs (1941-43). But he is also well remembered in WA as a drama critic and in theatre circles there as a director and playwright.

In the '30s as a senior journalist on the

West Australian, he established the position of drama critic on that paper under the byline 'Polygon' and initiated the West Australian Drama Festival, a competition held among amateur groups annually until the '60s. In his autobiography, *Looking About*, Sir Paul Hasluck says "I there had been available in those days the sort of money for the theatre that was made available in grants from public funds in later years. I might have left journalism."



But the war came and Hasluck was seconded to the Department of External Affairs, he then went to the United Nations Security Council, later entered parliament, becoming Foreign Minister, and finally Governor General, from which post he retired in 1974.

THEATRE SOUTH '81 SEASON

Corks popped, cubes flashed and greetings circulated, inaugurating Theatre South's 1981 season, which they hope to direct towards some 4,000 mature and some 10,000 child audiences. Williamson, Applebaum and Spang are on the left.

The Lord Mayor of Wollongong pledged the city's support of this infant professional company which made a strong beginning last year with their own evening adaptation of Molier's *Tartuffe* titled *The Common Pedlar's Run*, the naming Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, expressed the University's backing for Theatre South's enterprise. Don Davis the artistic director of Theatre South spoke of his role as the captain of a community theatre with aspirations for contributing to the social attitudes of Wollongong by producing plays which might tempt people from out of Wollongong to bus down as they do in Ontario Canada for Stratford and the other Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake the Shaw Festival. Mr Davis had himself run a theatre in the regions of Ontario this



Donald Smith as Carlo in *I Masnadieri* with Juan Sutherland as Otello. Photo: Peter Berwick

was the very respectable Caravand Players based in the town of St. Catherine.

It was good to see a theatre getting so much moral (and one hopes monetary) support in these oppressive times.
Barry O'Connor

BLEEDIN' BUTTERFLIES AT PLAYBOX

Playbox Theatre Company's next production, opening on April 7, is *Bleedin' Butterflies* by Adelaide writer Doreen Clarke. A play by a woman about women it's appropriately being directed by Rae Horri; the comments on the play as she sees it.

"Bleedin' Butterflies is a play about survival, it is about economic survival and survival in the broadest sense of spiritual and social survival. It is set in the 1930's during the Depression and the action takes place in a camp for the unemployed and homeless set up along the Centing River just outside Perth.

The Play particularly explores the options for survival that were open to women given the patriarchal structure of the society we live in. It takes as its main focus three quite different women, a young, middle-class girl from Adelaide, an older and much rougher and tougher woman from the East End of London and a middle aged handworking, Australian country woman, the mother of a married youth. We see how through the levelling experience of the Depression these women are forced to enter into each other's disparate lives and are in fact enriched by the experience.

But the play also reveals that for their own survival the women must subjugate themselves to a male

protector/husband and hope that he has enough good will not to leave them stranded — like bleedin' madonna butterflies. The play explores also the way in which men are handicapped by their sex role conditioning and looks at what happens to the male who fails to live up to what is expected of men.

"It is in times of crisis that values and truths are ultimately revealed and Doreen Clarke has made an apt choice in using the Depression for a vehicle to analyse the values and power structure of patriarchal society."

DEAR MONKEY!

Adrian Gurnee of Grapewine Theatre Productions has been working in Sydney to mount a production based on the comic of Monkey — a kind of Chinese folk hero somewhere between Charlie Chaplin and Castro Clay — a walking-talking-go with springs in this form.

The pilot to the show brought together the basic comedy team Monkey, Piggy, Sordy and their Master on the mythical journey to India, Tripulaka — played by Stewart Charlton, Su Crickshank, Mark Hambrey and Bill Doherty respectively, if not respectfully. It was shown at the Sydney Opera House Cinema on March 20. The show will have a cast of ten when it is presented later in the year in a new venue near Sydney's Chinatown.

A lot of traditional Chinese folk theatre is based on the "Hsueh shu" — but *Dear Monkey!* owes more to the commedia dell'arte and the Marx Brothers than Peking Opera. It's an interesting mix-up of costumes — and comedy unites knolls and heads (heads no matter what the colour of your money).

Some brilliantly effective masks have been created by David McKee for *Dear Monkey!*



Adrian Gurnee and the cast of *Dear Monkey!* Photo: Bruce Ray



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WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

by Norman Kessel

With two talented performers alternating in the demanding, conspicuous role in the musical *Elvis*, it was inevitable, albeit unfortunate, that comparison would be made. I'm not buying into that — especially as I have seen only Jennifer Murphy's performance and not that of *Marvin Hays* — but I did get another interesting angle from Peter Carroll, who plays Pres. Thinking of the many fans who now refuse to accept engagements of longer than six months, I asked him if he was finding it a strain to keep a job what is his longest run so far. (His several seasons, here and overseas, in *Ben Blain's The Christmas Brothers* were separated by longish intervals.) He agreed the role demanded constant concentration, but said he was helped enormously by having two leading ladies. "Their performances are so fundamentally different each change is like a refreshing course for me," he said. So while the two performers may appear identical from out front, they aren't necessarily so.

Plans for Stage 1 of Sydney's new Ensemble Theatre have been approved by North Sydney Council and at time of writing were awaiting Environment and Planning Department okay, then a final nod from council for a start to be made. Stage 1 will be built around the existing structure and performances will continue uninterrupted. However, when Stage II begins — about a year later, the company hopes — the theatre will go dark for about six months. What a glorious and exciting re-opening that will be in 1987.

Full singer Tina Turner is in the second row for the Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Barbra Streisand's The Man from Minsk*. A woman next to her, at first sight of the theatrical baroness of Shania Corbett's setting, exclaimed: "Oh dear, I'm afraid we're going to be smothered in dust!" Now's that for realism?

Incidentally, Miss Rowe recently disposed of her extensive wardrobe of mostly authentic period stage costumes, some of them going to SDC designer Anne Selton,

and she was delighted to see two of them adapted for use in *Melbourne* — the white dress worn by Naomi Handberg in the opening scene and the coat by Ruth Cracknell in the second act.

Sail on *Melbourne*, a relative was dismayed to find in a mature audience a large contingent of elderly Americans from the Queen Elizabeth II. She feared the worst and she did hear one visitor say she'd "like to read a newspaper" and another who "didn't like the weather", but was delighted by the apt attention and warm response of the party as a whole. A deserved compliment to author, director and cast.

Calling all amateur drama societies in NSW. They are invited to participate in a one-act play festival to be held at *Switzerland Circle Centre's* 960-seat theatre on May 29-30. Entries close April 14 with Mrs Caroline Stacey on 528 7800 or PO Box 61, Jannali, 2226. Mrs Stacey and her husband, experienced festival organisers, would have liked to write personal invitations to each group, but were unable to find any uncommitted list of the State's many amateur companies. A worthwhile cheer for the NSW Arts Council, perhaps? The Society hopes later to make the festival Australia-wide.

The *Arden Company*, put out of action a year ago by the stringent new fire safety regulations, is alive, well and "thriving", director Sonia Lester asserts now. After selling off its assets and paying all its debts, the company visited its Uluru premises on February 4. Remaining members are looking now for ways to supplement the considerable contributions made to the Sydney theatre scene in the company's heyday. Some says this could range from staging the right play at the right moment to sponsoring a single artist — actor, singer or musician. "If our future is to be mainly supportive, we will still feel that we have played our part," she added.

Sandra Bates, author of *When In Rome*, the very successful opener of this year's Festival of Sydney Playwrights, has been concentrating on final revisions of her second play, which she hopes to have workshopped soon. As yet untitled, it is about a chemist who takes a stand against transphobia. Two of this year's four festival programmes was immediate return seasons — *When In Rome* two weeks at Philip Street Theatre and *Justin Fleming's Manner* five weeks at The Ensemble. Another good score and a tribute to the wisdom of the selectors.

Met actors Pamela Gibbons in our local shopping arcade. Carrying her pretty

eight-months-old daughter, Loren, she said she is well, beginning to work again and looking forward to an early full moon so her showbiz career.

More or less as you read this, Sydney's Ensemble Theatre will be opening — on April 2 — *Hayes Gordon's* production of *Neil Simon's You Can't Take It to the Streets*. Hayes will also direct *Bernard Pomeroy's The Elephant Man*, listed for this year, but not necessarily immediately after the Simon play.

Now on a world tour with two engaging programmes — *The Robert Burns Story* and *Two For A Theatre* — Scottish-born John Cairney and his New Zealand wife, Hannah O'Sullivan, are, like two of the characters they portray, Robert Louis Stevenson and Fanny Gibbons, looking for a country in which eventually to settle. First choice at the moment is British Columbia, with New Zealand second. They didn't see much of Australia on their short visit to Sydney, but are planning to see other parts during a three month tour later this year or early next year.

The admirable *Playwrights Company* handles bravely on to establish the pleasant little theatre at *Beach Park* as a viable venue. Currently playing a *Ruth and Augustus Goss* *The Menus* for a limited season, to be followed on May 13 by a revival of the company's excellent production of *James Goldman's The Lion In Winter*. Elsewhere, *Disruption Productions* will, from July 8 to 19 present the company in a revival of *Henry 3: Part 1* at the Sir John Chisholm Auditorium, University of NSW. All three productions are aimed at HSC students, 10,000 of whom saw the last named in one week last year, but all are open to the general public.



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SPOTLIGHT

PEER GYNT'S DREAM TIME **KEITH MICHELL** TALKS TO CATHY PEAKE

Towards the end of a fairly rambling interview, Australian actor, writer, singer, director, designer and now playwright Keith Michell suddenly describes himself as "one of nature's visitors". He is talking about the lack of permanence in an actor's life and it comes as a wry and revealing remark from a man who, perhaps in spite of himself, plays his cards very close to his chest.

Though his poems, screenplays run to eight volumes or more, and he is clearly no novice to media variety about the spirit which moves him through such diverse channels, he remains a curious and nearly im-

penetrable mixture of the amiable and the reserved.

At present he is in Australia to play the lead for the Melbourne Theatre Company in his own adaptation of *Peer Gynt* - a baroque classic by Henrik Ibsen whom, he says, one of his Christchurch colleagues once described as "all ghosts, gnomes and gnomorrhoes".

He laughs at this, and is quick to add that the transmigration of *Peer Gynt* into *Pete McGenty* and the *Dreamtime* has meant the opportunity to inject a considerable amount of indigenous humour into the script.

Peer Gynt is an odyssey of self-

discovery provoking its eponymous hero into a series of adventures and roles, each of which explores his dilemma about fact and fiction. The Australian character, Pete McGenty, retains the bouquet of the original *Peer* - a raunchy, selfish, adventurous, prideful youth who ages without maturing and reality is forced upon him.

From his early abduction of a young bride on her wedding day, through his practical adventures in the United States, the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East to his return home to Australia in old age, Pete is haunted by the dreams and myths of his young manhood. His search for identity leads him through flirtations with power, wealth, sexuality, history and madness until he eventually finds redemption.

Keith Michell says the idea of the play has always appealed to him. "*Peer Gynt* is also about someone who leaves his country and goes abroad - he becomes an expatriate and then returns again.

"It always seemed a very good idea for an Australian subject. Now, in Europe, people tend to be either immigrants or refugees. The expatriate is much more likely to come from this side of the world."

The translation of *Peer Gynt* has posed more than a few problems and its author believes that Ibsen wrote much more colloquially than many of his more conservative and "respectful" translators realised.

"Ibsen wrote in rhyming patterns, if not in rhyming couplets, and the very long sentence which occurs towards the



end of the play reads like an excerpt from *Bambo Patterson*," he says.

He has updated the play which now opens in the 1950s and runs right up to the present. And while Peter McGinry is a dealer in drugs and narcotics as opposed to Peter Gyn's activities as a slave trader and manufacturer of heathen images, Keith Michell's adaptation has retained the 'dream-time' aspect of the play, the flights of fancy, and the ambiguities of a 'journey which may or may not be a fabrication of the kind Billy Liar was wont to make'.

Its Scandinavian hinterland of shadowy creatures and hobgoblins have been replaced by local bunyips and night-spirits.

Keith Michell's fascination with *Peter Gyn* also dates back to the 1950s when he first performed it for ABC radio in Adelaide.

At first his intention was to write a musical based on the theme, but, he says, he was so taken by its parallels with contemporary Australia that he abandoned that idea in favour of its present form.

The Keith Michell talents are indeed

versatile. Originally trained as an art student, his first art exhibition was held in 1959 and since then he has exhibited several times in London and New York.

His work includes a limited book edition containing lithographs illustrating Shakespeare's sonnets and a collection of paintings, now in London, based on *Peter McGinry and the Dreamtime*.

But he is still best known as an actor. Born and educated in Adelaide, he first went to the UK in 1949 and studied at the Old Vic Theatre School. He then joined the Young Vic Theatre Company and made his first West End appearance in *And So To Bed* in 1951.

Since then he has starred in a wide variety of theatrical events, including the enormously popular television series of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*.

But it is his recent success as a pop star in *Captain Beaky and his Band* which signals the latest change in direction for the artist. *Captain Beak* is an entertainment package for

children which has simultaneously found something like cult status with adults.

A *Captain Beak* single and LP record featuring Keith Michell climbed to the top of the charts in the UK recently, and the book of *Captain Beak*'s poems by Jeremy Lloyd and illustrated by Keith Michell has become a best-seller in England.

In Perth for the Festival recently, he was delighted when large sections of the audience sang along with the orchestral bits of *Captain Beak* at the Festival Concert.

All this, he says, has meant that he is now more frequently recognised in the street as *Captain Beaky* than as Henry VIII — which won him an Australian Emmy award not so long ago, and when he returns to London he will be plunging into a whole *Beak* industry that includes greeting cards, children's books and dishes.

Meanwhile, however, it is *Peter McGinry and the Dreamtime* with a cast of nineteen, and music especially composed for it by Bruce Smeaton which will be occupying his time.



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DAVID ALLEN AND BUCKLEY'S

by Michael Morley

David Allen's new play *Buckley's*, described as "entertainment with music — and politics," opens on April 4. It represents something of a departure for him, with its combinations of music, movement and dance, and for the State Theatre Company, which has set aside an extended period of workshops and rehearsals for the work.

Such an approach, he feels, is essential to what is a collaboration between himself, Aronze Taylor, Glen Henrich (music) and Nick Enright (lyrics). Already changes to the first draft have been made, and the opportunity to test the written (or devised) score in rehearsal, to change and re-arrange, is something he values. After the success last year of the depression show *On The Wollaby*, *Buckley's* is, in part, an attempt to treat the present day subjects of

unemployment and the search for a job and a direction in a similar musical form.

The title sets up the opportunities for those out of work. Buckley's chance, and, Allen feels, "The word has a kind of aggressive quality to it which would be appropriate for a musical. The piece is really about a group of people who, in social and economic terms, have no chance at all. Yet it's not a piece about unemployment as such. The trouble about doing a contemporary piece is that it could be very documentary: lots of statistics etc. and we feel in a way that this would not be appropriate for a company musical. And there are other companies and groups doing that sort of thing — hard hitting, more direct."

Allen and Aronze Taylor both did a fair amount of research and

backgrounding before he set down to the actual writing. They visited unemployment centres, spoke to various organisations, walked the streets and talked with those directly affected — the young unemployed. Understandably, given their respective backgrounds, Taylor's and Allen's approaches are somewhat different.

"Aronze came up with a lot of images, she starts with visual things. As an example, when people are out of work, they tend to lie in bed all day, the effort of actually moving becomes extreme. And images like this grew and developed as we talked about them. So we've got a couple of rather nice series out of this: there's one in a greenhouse, in a nursery with a kind of restrained orgy — sense of the heat and all that, and pot growing there. And there two suburban ladies see, well, 'wakened erotically' in this situation."

He does not see the piece as a revue; for him it is closer to something like a picaresque novel — lots of different scenes, but with a connecting structure by one central character who keeps on appearing. "Act I is set in various locations, and though it seems to be disjointed, in Act II it actually all comes together. The unifying factor is a building, which houses a men's hotel, a job centre, the headquarters of the police vice and drug squad and a massage parlour — just like one of those many old houses in Adelaide." (The last observation is more than somewhat tongue-in-cheek.)

David Allen's own manual workbench must look a bit like that theatrical setting at present: he's also at work on a play for Hartley CAE about the college's founder — "a fascinating character, though I'm not sure whether the play will turn out to be quite what they expected." He then goes to Tasmania, to be writer-in-residence for Salamanca for three months from July, and he has also started work on a film script, now into its second draft. And as for the idea for this second play being done by the STC? He's clearly pleased by this. "Before I felt very much an outsider in this place, but now the atmosphere is marvellous. I do think that at the moment the most interesting theatre in Adelaide is going on at the STC. That's what makes it so interesting here."

WAYS TO SHEAR A SHEEP

Community theatre at the mill

Regional and community theatre is taking many varied forms as it grows in quantity and importance. We look at the development of two very different regional theatre companies...

In the former Returned Soldiers and Sailors Woollen and Waxed Mill on the banks of the Barwon River in Geelong, community theatre has found an original home and style. The Mill, as it is affectionately known to local residents, now houses the Art and Design and Drama School of Deakin University, and a full-time professional theatre company under the directorship of James McCaughey.



The Mill Community's *The Burning of Benster's Hotel*. Photo: Jon Ford

Deakin's Senior Lecturer in Drama.

The Mill Community Theatre is a group of eight actors and community theatre workers who support a diverse range of theatre activities. The company's work is community oriented — Saturday morning classes for children, workshops for the handicapped, the aged, and unemployed kids; programmes for women at the Cono Lenseur Centre, classes for drama teachers, drama workshops for HSC students and schools' performances. In addition the company also gives shelter and support to a TIE team, The Woolly Jumpers.

But perhaps the most successful of the group's community activities are the regular Thursday Mill Nights which draw some seventy people to the Mill each week for an evening of participatory theatre games and workshops interlarded with performances and showings of work in progress by the Company, and performance by

visiting artists and companies.

Since The Mill Community Theatre opened in 1978, the Company has staged at least two professional seasons each year. These fall into two categories, plays of interest to the community, *Trojan Women*, *Ubu*, *The Tenth Man* by Company writer William Henderson, and various Brecht productions, *The Chalk Circle* and *The Exception and the Rule*, and plays created for the community from the history of Geelong.

It is this cycle of Geelong history plays which could be said to be the signature of the Company's unique and innovative theatrical style. The first of these and their inaugural production was *The Wool Game*. It was a group devised, participatory documentary theatre piece based on the history of the Victorian Woollen and Cloth Manufacturing Company's Mill from 1865 till 1922, and was written from research by Philip Gardner on the company's records.

Like many theatres created out of refurbished industrial sites the spatial quality and ambience of The Mill is very special. The conversion of the space into a theatre involved putting in lighting, heating and fixing the ceiling, but there is no stage and only minimal flexible seating. The result is that the integrity of the space has been retained. For company director, James McCaughey, "It is important that when people come to the Mill they don't say 'This is a theatre'. Instead they'll say, 'Isn't this interesting, I wonder what will happen here?' This is an interesting space with a rich history. We want to respect that."

The Wool Game set the tone for future Mill productions. When the audience entered they were issued with tickets making them share-holders in the mill and they participated in an unruly meeting between the company's directors in Scotland over the decision to establish a woollen mill in

Geelong. Later they moved to the back space to inspect a weaving machine which had arrived on the docks and been found to be too big to fit into the new mill and then they joined company hands to save the mill when the banks of the Barwon burst in a freak flood. At intervals they joined the workers in their annual picnic.

The Company's second production, *The Burning of Benster's Hotel* was similarly devised, and was based on the relationship of Geelong to Ballarat during the goldrushes of the 1850s. It also marked the beginning of a fruitful co-operation between the Company and Weston Bate, Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin, as his book *Ballarat, The Lucky City* formed the basis of the research for the play which



Philip Gardner and Jon Campbell in the Mill Community's *The Burning of Benster's Hotel*

covered the events leading up to the Eureka Stockade. In *The Burning of Benster's Hotel* the audience was first outfitted with the necessary equipment and supplies for the journey to the goldfields by various enterprising purveyors in the foyer, and then taken by perilous bullock dray to the diggings located in the theatre. Once there some of them even discovered gold on the spot where they were sitting and later fought as vigorously as their fellow miners to evade the licence hunts.

The third production *The Child*

Company Service arose when Weston Bale drew the Company's attention to the voluminous records and papers of The Clyde Company, a Scottish-Tasmanian syndicate formed to take out a lease on land in the Moorsbrook Valley. By the time the audience entered and were seated on overflowing wool bales generously lent by local pastoralists, they had already viewed various actors tableaux depicting aspects of the Clyde Company's decision to settle the district.

The Company's most recent production, staged in February this year, was a significant departure from its predecessors. It was the first of the cycle to be staged outside The Mill and in fact was the opening production of the Blackston Theatre at the new Geelong Performing Arts Centre. Like its immediate predecessor it is based on The Clyde Company Papers but for the first time written by our writer. The Company commissioned *Ladies of Fortune* from Melbourne playwright Colin Ryan, author of *The Speeding French*. *Albino*. His brief was to create a play from the diary of Miss Ann Drysdale, which was among the Clyde Company Papers.

Miss Drysdale, together with her partner Miss Caroline Newcomb, took out a lease on a sheep run at Horongcop in 1840. The duo formed the backbone of the play in which Ryan added imaginary incidents and characters, however a playwright would need to go far to find better characters than these redoubtable women. Miss Drysdale was going on fifty when she made the perilous journey from Scotland to the colonies where she faced the vicissitudes of heat, bushfires, blacks and scepticism of other settlers. Her partner Miss Newcomb was some twenty years younger and had already been to Australia for some time working as John Buchanan's governess in Tasmania. Their task and the trials they encountered were no different from those of other settlers, what makes them different and therefore dramatically interesting was the fact that they were single women in a world dominated by men.

Like the previous Mill productions the excitement lies as much in the incredible transformational style or direction as it does in the uniqueness of



Karen Paton and Meredith Rogers in the Mill Company's recent production, *Ladies of Fortune*.

the material. Using simple costumes and no set save a beautiful painted floorcloth depicting a map of the Geelong region, the ten actors and the composer Felix Maher create boldly a parody of sound textures, from buzzing sheep to crackling bushfires and a corresponding range of physical images from vast dinner tables to punting skiffs and horse drawn carriages. The result is a highly evocative form of theatre which challenges the imagination and sharpens the senses as each new event or scene is transformed before you into the next without the distractions of set and prop changes.

The structure of the play is simple and follows chronologically the lives of the women, however the addition of two parallel female characters, Mrs Luckland (Margaret Rickards) and her niece, Lucy (Rosabell Hill) provide high comic relief in their wistful femininity, to the staid and dour Miss Drysdale and her Wesleyan partner. Between them the six men play some twenty male characters — seamen, squatters, miners, shepherds and doctors of medicine and religion. It is therefore not surprising that, with the exception of Paul Chapple's portrayal of the squatter, Mr Armstrong, the acting honours go to the four women and particularly to Meredith Rogers and Karen Paton in the leading roles. The scenes between them of comradely endeavour and

superly affection have a delicately observed and heroic quality. My only musing about the production was the ending — it seemed structurally and aesthetically devastating that a play about two strong and interesting women should end with a weak and uninteresting man, particularly as the contrast it alluded to had already been well canvassed in the body of the play.

MILL THEATRE FORTHCOMING PRODUCTION

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| April 1 — 11 | The Woman Who Died For Her Husband by Euripides and The Bear by Chekhov |
| May 11 — 23 | Don Quixote |
| August | A new play at the Mill |

Riverina Trucking Co.

-at the crossroads

Just over a year ago, arriving in Wagga to take up the reins as the Riverina Trucking Company's third artistic director, Peter Barclay expressed his conviction that he regarded the RTC as capable of achieving standards comparable to those enjoyed by audiences in the capital cities.

This conviction fuelled my own observation, recorded in the April 1980 issue of *Theatre Australia*, that Barclay's first task in the Riverina "must be to re-establish faith in the RTC as a centre for vital professional theatre", and that time alone would serve to show whether this ideal could be achieved.

Well, there can be no doubt that Barclay's first year with the RTC has renewed public confidence in the Company as a headquarters for vital theatre. Even the most cynical of theatre watchers — and Wagga has its percentage of these pessimists — must concede that Barclay's 1980 blend of world premiere productions (*The Forsyth Dog*, *Such is Life*), recent plays (*Lean*, *Boys Over the Border*) and popular shows (*Grease*, *On Our Selection*) defined an innovative trend, reflected in increased attendances and a consequent upswing in box-office receipts — the best in the RTC's history.

There can be little doubt, too, that the RTC schedule for the first half of 1981 will continue this prescription. The season begins with the world premiere of Steven Berkoff's *Woe*, the sequel to *Eat* (which toured Australia to capacity audiences in 1978), and continues with Puff, Pim Gorm's study of the rise and falls of Edith Piaf, and a new production of *The Rocky Horror Show*. Sandwiched between these varied offerings, the RTC will undertake its first interstate tour by sending last season's one-man show *Such is Life* to Adelaide for a two-week run as part of the Adelaide Drama Festival with special assistance from the NSW Division of Cultural Activities. Additionally, the RTC will



Peter Barclay — from Wagga to Townsville

host performances in Wagga by Sydney's Kinetic Energy Dance Company (late-night performances during the run of *Woe*) and Errol Bray's *Shopfront Theatre*.

What will happen beyond these events is as yet unknown, since Peter Barclay will shortly leave the RTC and move north to Townsville as co-artistic director (with RTC founder and first artistic director Terry O'Connell) of the Central and Northern Queensland Theatre Company, a move that will throw the RTC into at least temporary uncertainty while the Board faces the task of screening applicants to secure a new artistic director.

Peter Barclay himself is at pains to ensure that the RTC is ticking over as smoothly as possible before he leaves. Yet the giant problem facing this company is funding. Currently the RTC is at the crossroads in terms of securing ongoing State and Federal funding Barclay describes as "a life and death question" the urgent need to establish supplementary local funding. The issue is complicated by the absence in the Riverina of large corporations or manufacturers among its locally based industries. Further, the Wagga City Council, in sharp

contrast to the councils of central and northern Queensland, has shown itself disinclined this year to provide support for its regional theatre company.

It doesn't seem to matter that the RTC generates an annual turnover for legal business in excess of \$100,000. "We acknowledge the RTC is a small professional company. At the same time its input is considerable, in terms of the amount spent locally. Yet we should be realistic. The amount of \$100,000 is barely adequate to support the kind of theatre I believe is right for this area."

As I see it, funding lethargy may spell the crucial difference between attracting a director of imagination and ability on the one hand, or a director of workmanlike skills and limited vision on the other hand. Barclay's will be a hard act to follow, because he has used his experience as assistant director at Nimrod astutely in tapping into the international theatre scene. His coup with *Woe* is an eloquent case in point — Barclay worked with Berkoff at the Nimrod during 1978 — and there is no reason to suppose this quality in his work will diminish. Lucky Townsville.

"Why should regional companies be deprived of the opportunities available to metropolitan-based companies?" asks Barclay. The answer lies in funding, usually at local council level, followed by tandem funding from State and Federal sources. The Wagga community must quickly assess whether it wishes to see its regional professional theatre flourish, or suffer a lingering and disconcerting decline. Perhaps, a leaf may be taken from central and northern Queensland, where there has been co-operation between councils in the region.

Peter Barclay has brought the RTC to the point where its policies are clear cut and its artistic recipe successful. For this theatre to survive in innovative and vital terms, an immediate expression of tangible local support is needed.

THE ELLIS COLUMN



A FILM WRITER REFLECTS...

The struggle has on the photograph went on and on without sign, unending, "I appear to be dead," said Ellis, pained. "Ah, it always goes like this," said the Chinese doctor and kicked it on the side. The legs drastically returned.

The chinaman then — an increasingly moribund machinery — tossed Ellis's quaking envelope of mortal flesh for long coils, brown sties, galloping shillouettes, Tairine Spa penoning and cancer. That right mind chest pains, choking breathlessness and howling nightmares Ellis awake hallucinating the Gerni Reaper among the business leaves at his window and earned the waste of his one brief spasm on the more morose business. In the years of his thirties that Shakespeare spent writing *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *The Tenth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Love*, *Marbach* and *Orlando*, Ellis had written his bottom drawer. And now, in what seemed the last moments of his chemo-pounding quiesce, he remembered what he had gone through to achieve that bottom drawer.

"I am a drawer plagiarist," confessed the handsome blonde American producer in a deep commanding voice as he monitored Ellis rest down on the wooden floor of an apartment casually devoid of furniture.

"and perhaps you will recognize some of the elements of the story. I am about to tell you. It's about this handsome blonde American producer bedazzled driven, played by myself, who is told that his blonde and blue-eyed lady son is dying of the malignant melanoma terminal ailment that lately carried off his blonde and blue-eyed beautiful and bleeding virgin wife. 'Son, he said in grief, I'll tell you, husband, and on the profits take you out where, say a here in the world. When do you want to do, son?' 'Australia, daddy,' said the phlegmically little guy with wings as he's doing to rest inside Jack. 'Now Uncle Jack, my brother played by Jack Thompson, who clearly resembles myself, don't you agree?'"

"The transatlantic dilemma," said Ellis, "is remarkable." (Ellis needed the money.) "— Was adopted when we both of us were English war orphans in Australian foster parents whereas I was adopted by American foster parents. But we kept in touch. So we fly Queen to Australia, my diving son and I. We are the Harbour Bridge. We go on the Manly Ferry. But it's not enough. We want to see the real Australia. Let's see the real Australia, Daddy! So we take a jeep and a pup tent and drive west to the Outback. On the roadside, ringing walls to a luscious grove in Calypso. We take him along. Bring them out of a dinner hall for misbehaviour in Bourke in Jensen, a beautiful happy girl. We take her along. She overcomes her drug problem in route in forms a deep and meaningful relationship with me and the kid. Eventually, while I am on leave being provisioned Jensen is capped by a passing truckload of drunken blood-soaked Hungarian thieves who on the struggle kill Calypso and kidnap the dying mother. I am on after them. There is then a wonderful jeep chase across the sand dunes of ironic northern Australia, and a final dramatic heart-stopping shoot-out. And the little fish dies in my arms. 'Daddy,' he said, 'Daddy, I was worried. I'm glad I saw Australia.' What do you think?"

Ellis looked at his son. They were close, convincing and real.

"Great," said Ellis, "and bound to sell in America." He then sat down with a great success in his heart and wrote the script.

Six months later the handsome blonde producer came back straggled from Los Angeles. "Do you know what this bastard at Warner Brothers did to me?" he said. "He threw the script all as off-handily down as the desk and said 'Listen, we get none of these a work. So what's new?' It is my wonder with people like that in charge I fished off out of Hollywood! I said 'Yes'."

A year later Ellis went to the movie he made instead. Called *Essay On Pornography* and then hand-held with improvised dialogue it was about an adolescent woman who hopes to fulfil herself spiritu-

ally, by appearing in a pornography movie and is disappointed. So, on the whole, was Ellis' original account of an unusual film by the same name.

Ellis, puffing, with a small malfunctioning tape recorder glued to his chest and transcribing, very slowly, the softly snoring pandemonium in his heart, climbed Paddington Town Hall steps in quest of a public screening, followed by angry questions from a railed film-buff audience, of *Manly This Time* (airily with game mouth labelled *Manly This Time*), his son and Anne Brookbank's odd little comedy of bedward manners, starring Judy Merrow, Masha Fandora, Bill Hunter, Mike Frisno, Chris Hayward, Leonard Teale, Ron Schuster and Jill Perryman, about the thirtieth year to heaven of a modern young woman's life in the dying days of the Whitlam era. The film, having broken house records in Hobart and won two awards, was labelled unsuccessful by Gino Coote of Roadshow, evidently some kind of snar, and denied a release in Sydney for reasons Ellis, albeit publicly snorting, could privately understand. Six years on the making, Ellis was sick to death of the bloody thing anyway. Barely worth all the lousy flaming trouble. As he reached the cinema, he felt an ominous tightening in his chest.

The screening Ellis, having clanked in his seat a fifty foot marcella now joining like his toothling mark ruled him Jack Thompson on a market one across a profound ravine. What wondered Ellis, would this handsome courteous marriage scene request of him on of *The Fair-house* director his foreplay as Camus had been doing enough not to mention the director's outburst that squawk, faced the popular womanish, and the severely gawking power of all rough members of the two blonde, beautifully made film stars, now shown as far as apple blossom who brought him afternoon tea. It is an hard, is brief to drive where to look, as what to join, or how suddenly to reach for the man sugar. There must be more was thought Ellis, of giving an actor to make a script, even as he had as *Maybe This Time*.

"How dare you," said the narrow-eyed monster of ritual precision in the Town Hall entrance, "spend four hundred thousand dollars making a film type how dare well was bound to be unsuccessful!"

"We thought it was commercial," said Ellis, miserable, wanting to go home, "if only on the grounds that no film in all human history with a woman as the central character has ever lost money. Cuddly Darling John Emmeville. *Good With The Wind*. Because women go to films with female content, and stay away in droves from films like *Dern Merv* and *The Dirty Dozen* with brute male content, and if only half the women in Australia go to *Marie*

WILL THE BOOM BOOMERANG?

The current expansion in the movie industry is assessed by Elizabeth Riddell.

Living on the brink seems to be the normal state of every film industry, in whatever country, and Australia is no exception. It looked for a long time as if we would be permanently relegated to the position of useful backdrop — with certain benefits for technicians and bit players — for stories, directors and performers from the United States.

This is what has happened to the film industry in the UK. And since the resurgence of the film industry in Australia, roughly ten years ago, there have been some genuinely barren seasons. It appeared to some that the only thing that could keep the film scene alive and healthy would be the injection of a lot of willing money, and that this money could be obtained only by means of a tax-saving incentive system, to encourage investors.

Well, up rode the cavalry in the nick

of time as of October 1980 the government dangled a carrot in front of film investors. 150% of capital expenditure in the acquisition of the initial copyright in new Australian films is eligible for write-off in the first year of expenditure. There is also an exemption from income tax of an amount of net earnings by an investor in such a film up to 50% of his or her investment. This is very encouraging to producers — all they need now is a good lawyer. Incidentally, there will be a burgeoning of lawyers who understand the industry, just as there has been a burgeoning of lawyers specialising in copyright.

Certain fears have been expressed to the effect that easy money may produce a crop of bad films, but there is still enough risk in the financial structures to make potential investors wary of handing over Aunt Dorothy's legacy without looking carefully at the

project.

The budgets will be bigger this year, but not big enough to lead to excess. Producers in Australia are used to bringing in their films at under \$1 million, funded as they have mainly been by the Australian Film Commission, the State commissions, corporations and the distributing-investing houses of Roadshow, Hoyts and Greater Union. In future the extra money that can make the quality difference for location, crew and equipment will come from the private investor.

Among the films in various stages of pre-production, production and editing all the finest Australian talent is represented except for Fred Schepisi, who has directed, and is now editing, a US Western called *Barbarosa*, featuring Willie Nelson. Schepisi's *Chariot of Justice* (Kin Lorich) was misunderstood and unappreciated by the local press and highly praised in the UK and US. So Schepisi naturally went where he is understood and valued. Doubtless he will be back.

In the meantime, every season has its star, and the current star is Bruce Beresford. For *Breaker Morán* Beresford is directing *Puberty Blues* (Joan Long producing) with a cast of young people on Cronulla Beach. They are rather a different lot from his schoolgirls in *The Getting of Wisdom*. Next he will make *The Fortunes*, from the novel by Gabriel Lord, about a teacher kidnapped with her children from a country school.

But the most superficial survey of the local scene would not be complete without a note on Margaret Fink, whose *M. Bradstreet Carter* was, and is significantly successful, with interesting reviews from overseas critics and a nomination for costume



Fred Schepisi's *The Chariot of Justice* (Kin Lorich) — misunderstood and unappreciated

designs in the Academy Awards. Ms Fink has several pots boiling at once. For *Love Alone*, from the novel by the distinguished writer Christina Stead, with the possibility that Evan Jones (*Wake in Fright*) will do the script, Eden's Look from the novel by Sumner Locke Elliott directed by Gillian Armstrong from Seymour's script, a film she calls a "hard core romance, very classy", with a script by Bill Harding a mini-series for Digby Wolfe on Channel 10 about the relationship, rather than the events, concerning Sir John Kerr and Gough Whitlam, script by David Williamson, and "an epic by Bill Harding, impossible to categorise" — her words — which she would like to see directed by Jan Sharman or Ken Russell!

In 1980 two new film making partnerships emerged. The first was the Rupert Murdoch-Robert Stigwood combination calling itself R&R, whose first project was *Gallipoli* directed by Peter Weir. The second is the Adams-Packer Film Productions Ltd (Philip Adams, advertising man and funny writer and Kerry Packer of Australian Consolidated Press, Wine Industries, quarter horses, ski resorts etc) which will make *Wis of the Never Never* and *The Danera Boys*, the story of the Jews on the hell ship Danera, who eventually made it to Australia.

Philip Adams is also producer of Alex Seer's animated film, *Gravel*, *Gravel*, the story of the "jumping, dancing, joke-telling, highly entertaining monster", a favourite with children and a cult figure for adults. From John Gardner's novel.

Other films of interest now at some stage of manufacture, are *Starstruck*, a rock musical produced by David Effick and Richard Brennan, directed by Gilliam Armstrong, written by Steve MacLean, *Handwink*, produced by Pam Oliver and Errol Sullivan, directed by Claude Whatham from the UK, a crime drama with John Hargreaves and Judy Davis, *Winner of our Dreams* produced by Richard Mason, directed by John Duggan with Bryan Brown and Judy Davis, *Doctors and Nurses* with a cast of children directed by Maurice Murphy of *Ferry Finn*, *Double Deal* directed by Brian Kavanaugh with the visiting Frenchman Louis Jourdan and Angela Pinch McGeopre, *The Man From Snowy River*, a Michael Edgley



Margaret Fink's production — My Brilliant Career — significantly overrated

project, *Capricornia*, from the Karen Herbert epic, directed by John Heyer, *The Killing of Angel Street*, produced by Anthony Buckley and directed by Donald Crombie with Elizabeth Alexandra, *Heartwave*, directed by Phil Noyce, set in Sydney's Kings Cross and produced by Hilary Linstead, *A Burning Man*, produced by the McElroy brothers from a script by Kit Denton, *The Year of Living Dangerously* again the McElroys, directed by Peter Weir from Christopher Koch's novel of the same name, *Relatives*, produced by Helen Selman with Anthony Bowman as writer-director.

Partners, a Tim Burstall film with a David Williamson script, *Best of Friends*, a comedy produced by Tom Jeffrey, directed by Michael Robertson, *Monkey Grip*, from Helen Garner's novel about addiction, produced by Pat Lovell, directed by Ken Cameron, *Mad Max II*, directed by George Miller.

In New Zealand Andrew Brown, a New Zealander who has been extremely successful in Britain, has produced *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, directed by John Lang with David Hemmings and John Hargreaves, and *Red Blood* (formerly called *The Shooting*) with Mark Shivas (of television's *Givering Pines*) directing and Jack Thompson and Carol Burns in the principal roles. Both these films could be called crime dramas, both were shot on location, both are based on fact.

A writer in *New York magazine*,

very impressed by *Breaker Morant*, asks, "What are the future prospects and perils? Will the boom boom boom?" and answers its own queries with the warning that we should stick to our "artistic upward curve" and avoid being mistaken by a foreign capital invasion of a "seductive film-making country where the accent is on making good movies rather than a fast buck." There speaks the voice of one side of the industry.

The other side is for making "international" films with a modulated English, Australians, Americans and whoever else happens along, against landscapes not identifiably Australian, with interiors that could be anywhere in the world. One rather shaming footnote to this attitude is that two films, *Marjoe* and *Mad Max*, are reported to have been dubbed with American accents solely to make them more acceptable to, or easier on the ears of, Americans. In fact the Australian films that have succeeded abroad — and we have to succeed abroad where the millions of movie goers are located — are those that stayed recognisably national in character.

The other question to vex Australian film makers will come when a director — for instance, Shivas or Russell — is wanted because of his special style, or a non-Australian actor is thought necessary, and Equity may be unympathetic. But every other industry has to live with union regulations as amenable as possible, so why not the film industry?



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David Williamson

On writing for film

David Williamson is best known as this country's most successful playwright, but he is also a prolific screen writer, producing both original screen plays and adapting his own stage work for the cinema. He spoke to *Theatre Australia* about his writing, the differences between the two media and the differing attitudes to writers of the two industries.

Film work...

My first screen play was the adaptation of *Stork* to *The Company of Stork* for Tim Burstall in 1970. Then came the *Libido* segment for *The Family Man* directed by David Baker in which I urged him to use Jack Thomson, whom I had thought excellent in *Wake In Fright*. *Prisoner* came next, that was an original screen play. It got a very mixed critical response, and as retrospect it probably was a little heavy-handed, but it was a sincere attempt to look at an actor with aspirations in a society where there's only one class system - an educational one. Because there were some sex scenes and some violence it got a casting from the more sensitive critics - who were waiting for *Peter at the Breaking Rock*, but it hadn't come along yet.

I was commissioned to write another screen play by Hexagon and Burstall which I called *The Tar Man*, but it wasn't shot then because they thought it was a bit of a downer and didn't have a happy ending. It concerned a small toy manufacturer caught in personal and financial problems and it tried to chart his



attempts to behave responsibly in crisis situations. It's now been resurrected by Tim (Burstall), who started shooting it this week under the new name of *Parables*, but it is really a companion piece to *Prisoner*.

Following that was the adaptation of *The Remonstrator* and then *Don't Part*. Then an original film script, *Eliza Fraser*. And then I started working on *Galspeth* with Peter War about four years ago and that's a project that's simmered off and on continuously. It went through about seven or eight drafts until it was shot last year. And most recently was *The Club*.

The differences in writing for film and stage...

A much higher percent of the impact of a film is visual. You've got the great, flat canvas as a painter's scene, in front of you, and you'd be missing the medium if you didn't utilize that potential for detail. Dialogue in a movie is important, but not as important as on stage, on screen it is functional, terse and short to allow those visual details to occur. But perhaps the most vital writer's function is the overall narrative structuring of a screen play - which scene follows what is more important than the actual dialogue. Of course there you're always collaborating with the director whose interest is also in structure.

The stage can use a far greater amount of language as a performance vehicle for actors. A three-dimensional actor can be there and use his body and vocal equipment to make a performance out of quite intricate language. A prime example of that is Tom Stoppard who provides an intricate musical score in language for a virtuoso performance from an actor.

With a play you work away and then give the finished product to a theatre while with a screen play you wouldn't start on one without a commission although there are commissions for stage plays too. I was commissioned to write *Crilodan Heroes* for the Nineties tenth anniversary and there was a certain pressure to make it light and bright - which may not have been a good thing in retrospect.

The process of play to film...

The major thing is the loss of verbal complexity. I'm always acutely aware that a 90-minute film, if it's to look at

all films, can only have half the dialogue that a 90 minute play can have. Hopefully that's replaced by well integrated visual material, but essentially you're going to see a very different thing on screen to what has gone before on stage.

For instance a lot of the moral shadings and fine tunings of *The Club* on stage couldn't go into the film or it would have become dreadfully boring. I learnt that lesson very early when I saw *The Ironies* Covert with the best cast imaginable, yet suddenly those three-dimensional performers were two-dimensional on film, coming across a screen and that magnificent play just couldn't carry with all the verbal detail retained. Film can't give

sweating and straining as they trained and that's very real. On stage the dialogue can legitimately be faked up a little in emphasis and level of articulacy, while on film it had to come down to make it credible and realistic.

Galipoli...

Galipoli was the closest and longest collaboration I've had with any one director. We tended to have exhaustive and exhausting sessions of three days or so together then I'd go and write a draft, or Peter would go away and rework bits of previous drafts with some rough dialogue to show the sort of thing he wanted and then I'd run it all through the typewriter. My original brief was a two page memo which said: "I want to see the official accreditation in screenplay by me from a story by Peter Weir

and not only one, but four lines for them.

At the moment the fine cutting and post synching are being done. I'm working with Peter on dialogue for when characters are off stage. It's amazing what you can do with synching when their backs are turned. I'm too close to make any objective assessment, but I think it's looking terrific, in terms of a wedding between strong but simple narrative and visual complexity. I think it's got a terrific balance.

Being involved in a film like that is a much more complex and harrowing process than theatre. The writer starts at the inception and follows it through to some extent right up to post synching. You live with a film for far longer in that way. I was on location in Egypt because there were some scenes that couldn't be scripted until we found the location, so I had to go over and write accordingly. It's certainly a much more exacting and sprawling engagement than a stage play; *Traveling North* and *Celluloid Heroes* were both written during the period I was working on *Galipoli*.

Celluloid Heroes and the film industry...

I think *Breaker Moran* is an excellent film and Jack Thomson's performance is superb, but for the whole nation to go mad because we won a Supporting Actor prize at Cannes is a little unrealistic. There's a part of my nature — the satirist side of me — that wants to deflate excess, and I thought, "the film industry's getting too big for its boots, I'll have a go at it."

I suppose I felt too, as all writers do, that they've suffered at the hands of the film industry. I haven't met one writer that's ever worked in film that hasn't felt he's been ripped apart and used and abused — whereas my experience in theatre has been just the opposite. You feel that you're an important person in theatre; your skills are respected, directors do take a lot of care trying to get your concepts onto the stage. Not many writers can cope with the sudden change of status in conceding that the director is the key man in the film and that they are in a sense just a functionary. That balance is largely true because film is such a visual experience and, crudely, the job of the director is to avoid all visual



The cars of Don's Party — the movie

you inventive use of dialogue — its strength is realistic story-telling. For instance a quasi-naturalistic playwright like David Mamet uses arresting speech rhythms and inflections which make his language like a musical score, but it couldn't work on screen; it would seem utterly overblown and not realistic at all.

Cannes said of *The Club* that the film had intellectually downgraded the play, but that's a lack of awareness of the difference between the two media. On stage it could be seen as about power struggles generally and on film it became about the workings of a football club. You saw footballers

— but in fact the two things are incredibly mixed.

An enormous amount of research had to be done for *Galipoli*. With the other historical piece I've done, *Eliza Fraser*, there was also research to do, but it wasn't an attempt to faithfully follow the facts, it was rather a satirical look at our recent past. Here we talked to a lot of old diggers and suddenly we had to get back inside a set of attitudes which made World War One plausible. To a modern mind it's hardly thinkable that a line of young Australians would, at a word, leap out of a trench into saturation machine gun fire and all get themselves killed,

cliches, the job of the writer is to avoid cliché of dialogue and both have to avoid structural clichés. The writer doesn't have that vital role of overall ringmaster if you like, and he feels powerless. After all, he can be sacked at any minute and a new writer brought in.

I meant *Celluloid Heroes* to be a good returned act of revenge, but obviously it wasn't as good as it should have been — although the writer isn't, the producer Nestor Siroli, is just as reprehensible as anyone else in the film.

Of course it's about a terribly bad film — it was prophetic in that when it was written there were tax loopholes, but now there are enormous tax loopholes and there are going to be films like that shot. *The Club*, for instance, had to be shot before the 30th June; the script was ready but the production had to be hurried up because there were taxes involved.

Problems facing Australian screen writers...

The main problem is the one of having to realise that under the set-up we've

got, films in Australia are director-based and the writer has no power in that situation. They either have to learn to co-operate with the director and be realistic about their role, or try to set up an alternative system like Johnny Dingwall (who wrote *Sandals Too Far Away*), who is trying to produce his own film now, or like Bob Ellis and Anne Brookbank did to some extent with *Marble Through Time*. But if you take that second course you're doing it at your own risk because a creative director has skills that you ignore at your peril. There's no easy path for a film writer anywhere in the world and certainly not in Australia. It's a matter of learning to live with your role which is quite distinct from that of a writer in theatre or in prose writing.

There is a fear amongst writers that because of the money flowing into the industry, overseas writers will be used by Australian producers and directors. It's very mistaken because there is writing talent in this country that's not being properly utilised in screen play writing. It's sheer affront on the part of producers and directors to think they have international talent as

a class and that writers haven't.

Learning a country is not something overseas writers can do easily. I would no sooner go to the West Coast and start trying to write American dialogue rhythms without living there a long while than I would fly to the moon. Dialogue rhythms are very idiosyncratic to a locality and if you want to get the right feel of a place you have to use a writer who is indigenous to the country — there is no other way.

Bernard is to be commended in his next project, *Fortress*; he stuck out for Gordon Graham against the Murdoch organisation who wanted to import someone. Tim Burstall, though, has decided to use an overseas writer for the script of *Kangaroo*, dismissing any local writer. I think he could have at least asked for a treatment from someone like David Allen who's written a very fine play — *Inside Down At The Bottom Of The World* — on the subject. And the NSW Film Commission are funding it. The Australian Writers' Guild think there should be a responsibility on funding bodies to make their films as Australian as possible — because it's our tax money that's paying for them.

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BRUCE BERESFORD

ON DIRECTING



Bruce Beresford is one of our most acclaimed film directors, particularly following the recent international success of *Breaker Morant*. More than any other director he has specialised in adapting Australian plays for cinema, including *Breaker Morant*, but also Williamson's *Don's Party* and *The Club*. His other major works, *The Getting of Wisdom* and *Money Movers*, along with his two current projects, *Paberty Blues* and *Fortress*, have all been adapted from novels.

Beresford spoke to *Theatre Australia* about his work in film, its relationship to the stage and his own *modus operandi*. Directing for theatre and film...

The two fields are so very different, it's not just a matter of being able to direct actors well. Historically the number of directors who have made the transition is very very few. Elia Kazan is the only one who springs to mind with a high degree of success. Hal Prince came onto the set of *Paberty Blues* the other day — he's made a couple of movies, one of which was never released — and I asked him if he was going to make any more. He said "Never. Everything I do on stage I

think of in that kind of format, where it all happens there and the audience is here and there's no shifting of distance. But the minute you're cutting in and out of focus I can't pace it or time it any more. I haven't got that kind of control. And then the cutting alters it again and I'm just lost."

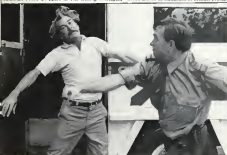
Everyone in Australia thinks that all theatre directors should direct a movie and all movie directors should go out on a sinking boat — no one thinks movie directors should go near a theatre, but I'm terribly interested in all that. It would give me the opportunity to work with actors which is primarily what I like doing. I like the idea of moving them on a stage, that kind of fixed thing where it's a



Nonnally Fools as Exiles in The Getting of Wisdom



Brian Brown as Macbeth in Broken Blood



Ed Devereaux and James Dixon in Mummy Men

completely different sort of challenge. There are a lot of plays I've been intrigued by, that I wouldn't like to film but I would like to do on stage — particularly Pinter plays. I don't think any of them have been well filmed.

People used to film plays as silent movies, which always struck me as totally rubbishy, they'd take something which worked on stage because of the dialogue and the way it was spoken and do it with the same actors. Crazy. Then when sound came in they started shooting it from the point of view of a theatre audience and it went back all over again. You've got to rethink them. In a movie the one thing you don't have is the actual presence of the actors which is such a plus on stage. Once that's gone you're making

up for it with close up, camera angles, cutting, sudden revelations — all those elements of film technique.

Adapting plays for film...

I do like dialogue and I do like characters and it just happened that Williamson had written two plays that attracted me. Though when I came to *The Club* I wished I didn't like it so much, there were terrible problems.

If you're filming a play and faced with the problem of doing it in one room the demands are that much greater. *Don't Part* is a prime example, you can't say, "we'll go out here and give the audience a breathing space," you come in every day and say, "Jesus, we're still in this room, what can I do to hold the audience's atten-

tion now we've seen it from every corner and the same people are still in the same room still talking." That's why other directors turned it down. We used the swimming pool and the backyard, but that was as far as you could go. Williamson did originally try shifting it round more but it was impossible because it's set around the television and the election night party and dramatically you'd have ruined it. That's the problem with any play, you've got to be very careful not to destroy the very thing that made it work.

With *The Club* the critics complained that the film had lost the wedge reference that the play had, but there's no way that the reality of film isn't going to make things more specific. In the play it all had to be set in the boardroom to get it on stage at all, which made the piece more of a metaphor for power politics generally. But in the film you had to set it more realistically, to keep it enclosed in the boardroom would have been absurd. I'm not even sure that Williamson ever intended those allusions that a lot of people have read into the play. I think that good writers like him but on certain human truths in any case and just the fineness of his writing will put them there without him setting down and thinking, *aha, this is a metaphor for...*

In any movie that's adapted from anything, play or novel, any holes in the plot will show up dreadfully. You could read a novel and enjoy it, but if you make it a film you have to paper over the cracks because of the medium's inescapable penchant for realism. Maybe it's because you see everything so clearly and in such detail that why fantasy films so rarely work, the screen gives such vigour and immediacy, although thematically it still extends.

The process of adaptation...

Working with Williamson usually has been fairly easy, he's got a good sense of what'll work in a film. With *The Club* I made a number of suggestions and he came up with a draft which used some, ignored some and came up with some much better ideas. Then we'd go through that draft together and make comments. I think we went through three or four drafts. In the first place he cut the dialogue too extensively — one draft I

timed at 55 minutes! Usually you're always cutting because writers put in far too much...

For *Breaker Morant*, I wrote the whole screenplay. The South Australian Film Corporation had wanted to make a film of *Breaker Morant* for a long time and at first they had a script which was an adaptation of Kit Deane's novel. It was the *Breaker's* whole life and just a montage of short scenes from which, to me, nothing emerged except confusion. Then I heard of Kenneth Ross's play, which was on in Melbourne, and we finally bought the rights to that. I wasn't mad about it, but it solved the problem of the way of doing it. The trial here was the central event and brought out all aspects of the man's life. I went to London to do research in the Army Museum and worked in the Mitchell Library here and wrote a screenplay in which bits of the play came into the courtroom scenes. Strangely, even the Kitchener scenes and the summing up speech are not in the play. The summing up is basically the original thing; it's a dangerously long chunk — six minutes — for an audience to sit

through, and if Jack (Thomson) hadn't done it so brilliantly you would have had to throw it away.

The writers...

If writers feel downgraded by the movie process they should push to direct films themselves — as I've urged Williamson to do. Though there have been a large number of cases where very distinguished screen writers did direct movies or their own scripts and they just haven't worked. I think it's because their lack of film technique confuses them about what's going to work on screen. They put in too many words, they repeat things they've already said and tend to say things that could be told visually.

For instance in *The Getting of Wisdom* there was one scene where the younger girl moves into the room with the older one. In the screen play Eleanor Wincomb had the girl go in and the two of them have a long conversation. I cut it out and Eleanor said "What's going to happen, then?" I said "Nothing. They're going to walk into the room and look at each other, end of scene." She didn't think it could

possibly work, but it did and that said absolutely all of it. No writer would ever think of doing that, they would always put it into words.

Actors....

Generally it's a matter of casting them properly. I have a vision of what they should look like and be like and I cast them very carefully and once you've done that it's seven eighths over. I just talk to them about what sort of performance I want.

The work process...

I can see it all finished when I start. I know exactly what it'll be like. I know how every frame, cut and visual will be, doing it is just a rope job. It still takes a long time to get the script so I can achieve that. It's like having a movie projected in my head. When I'm working people say, "why are we doing that again?" It's just the same. But it's not the same. I have a very fixed vision of what it is and it has to match exactly or it's wrong. I get very frustrated if for some reason or other I have to drop something. Once or twice I've had an

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43



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The Writers' Centre

AFTVS' NEW PROJECT

"Gee, you're a writer — that must be interesting. What do you do for a living?"

Most writers have learnt to live with this kind of statement. Some have even learnt to come back with a line such as "you call this living?". For the Australian Film and Television School, this year more than any other, is the one to establish the role of the writer in the eyes of the public.

Aware that for too long the writer, particularly in the fields of film and television production, has been regarded as the chap who pops the script through the letter-box and then disappears while others bring his work to life, the School has given top priority to the training, fostering and promoting of Australian writers. It has announced key appointments in the field of training for writers and has brought together all its writing training programmes within a newly created Writers' Centre.

The Writers' Centre, located opposite the AFTS studios in Sydney, is a compact office complex accommodating staff and fulltime students of the writing workshop. It offers a venue for courses held in Sydney and is available as a drop-in centre for writers at all levels of skill and experience. It will co-ordinate the present Screenwriting Course within the Fulltime programme and several courses offered by the Open Programme in subjects such as script and narration writing, documentary writing and writing for television. Such courses are offered from time to time in all main population centres.

Normally the School has a complement of four fulltime writers developing their skills in screenwriting in workshops. This year this number has been increased to eight through short term placements hand with the assistance of the Literature Board of the Australia Council. Students differ vastly in age and background but they

all have the one writing, burning ambition to improve their craft, producing high quality scripts for the Australian industry.

By way of further innovation, 1981 will see some major training in the writing component of the Fulltime Programme, in that students of the Screenwriting Course will be much more involved in the main stream of the Programme, with active involvement in general studies, screen studies, actor-director workshops and other training activities which they will share with the students of the three-year Diploma course in film and television production. Under this proposal, the previous writer-in-residence nature of the course will be mainly confined to the second half of the year.

For their part, the Diploma students will this year join their writing colleagues for regular weekly workshops in script analysis and they will also have the availability of the Writers' Centre personnel for script consultancy.

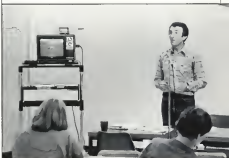
The Writers' Centre also houses a consultancy to service, advise, instruct

and encourage writers, wherever they may be. In practical terms, the consultancy organises writing workshops in which the practical production using actors and television studios, is an essential component. Already a successful two month course has been conducted in Sydney. As a result, several relatively inexperienced writers have developed and improved their skills to the extent that the School is planning a further course for them, based on an intensive one-to-one level of tuition.

In Adelaide, the Writers' Centre commenced a similar high level, carefully constructed writing course in March and has already begun a monthly consultancy with four professional writers in South Australia, aimed to direct their skills into producing high quality television drama. Victoria and Western Australia's needs in the writing areas are at this moment being assessed and with a firm commitment to serve these needs by the School.

The School announced three key appointments to the Writers' Centre:

Following a long vacancy and an



international search conducted with the assistance of the Australian Writers' Guild, the appointment was made of Keith Thompson as Head of the Writing Workshop.

High Stuckey was appointed to a part-time position as Lecturer in Writing, a new position was created of Writing Consultant within the Open Programme, and this has been filled by Austin Steele.

They will co-opt other experienced writers both local and overseas to join the Centre for short periods and be available to offer advice and training in their particular field of specialization.

Laura Jones, the creator of *The Oracle* serial on ABC-TV, is currently helping Keith Thompson in providing a script consultancy to the students of the Fellows Programme, while Ron Blair and Michael Cove are assisting Austin Steele with the Open Programme workshop in Sydney.

In July, the doyen of British comedy, Barry Took will arrive at the School for two months as writer in

residence. Took's credits include BBC Radio's *Around the Home*, *Around our Knees* and *The Clams in Take It From Here*, and television's *The Army Game*, *Bonnie and Sandy*, and more recently *Maverik*, *Prison's Flying Circus* and *Father Dear Father*. He will visit all those areas where writers need feedback and where his talents as a writer and a gifted commentator will be best received. His visit has been made possible largely by assistance of the Literature Board of the Australia Council.

Storley Walton, the Director of the APTS, said "The concept of the Writing Centre in Australia is an exciting one. A place where writers can get together to exchange views, to learn more of their craft, but also a place that will give to writers, wherever they may be, the services that they may need. We hope to offer expertise without vested interest."

Austin Steele said of the Centre "It will be a channel for the interchange of ideas, a bridge between producers and managements on one hand and writers on the other, providing a service to managements as well as to writers. We

aim to keep everybody abreast not only of techniques but also of markets, both locally and overseas."

"The Centre has the potential to be a focal point — a clearing house, and we want people to know that they can call on us for help and advice whether or not they are currently professional writers. It may be the small town dentist with one script in the bottom drawer of his desk who could become a fine screenwriter if he knew where to turn for guidance."

"For the more experienced writer, the Film and Television School has a wealth of human and physical resources in its staff, its library, studios and theatres."

When the School there has been a general enthusiastic welcome for the Writers' Centre "We need good scripts" is the cry of the producers. "Good, we can write them" is the answer from 10 Lygonpark Road, the home of the Writers' Centre. From now on, the joke "script writer eh? What do you do for a living?" could become an old and hackneyed joke, as the Australian writer takes his rightful place in the entertainment industry.

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**1981 AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL
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THE WOMEN AND THEATRE PROJECT

by Chris Warewood

Imagine it, when you were in the theatre, you invariably saw plays written by women, directed by women, designed by women, with women performers outnumbering male actors about five to one. Would you not perhaps feel that you were getting a rather skewed view of the world? That the social experience of women, as it might be reflected in the theatre, is not that of men, even if the works enticed you to come to the theatre described the play (as they so often do) as "universal"? That the ideas in such theatre might only represent the interests of some of the audience? That theatres were legitimising "absolute truths" because those "truths" were the truths of those in power? That all manner of myths about those not equally represented (in this hypothetical case, men) were being perpetuated because men were not able to argue against them?

Perhaps, if you answered "yes" to these questions, you might understand what brought some 60 women together in a dark theatre on a series of bright afternoons in August last year, in response to an invitation from Jude Kuring and me. Maybe you would identify with the wide range of reactions that day to a set of similar questions: anger, frustration, resentment, a sense of being artistically stunted, intellectually gagged. Above all, though, there was optimism, goodwill, energy for changing a situation in which women are grossly underrepresented in statistical terms in areas of creative control, or misrepresented in areas of

creative portrayal.

At those early meetings, we settled our aims (trying to encompass the breadth of our professional theatre experience as writers, performers, technicians, administrators, directors, designers, researchers, etc):

- * to widen decision-making opportunities in all aspects of theatre including writing, funding, performance, technical, production, management, design and composition, by ensuring that women are equally represented and in a position to effect equal opportunity policies
- * to encourage women directors, and to give them experience, which will also foster different points-of-view and interpretations of roles from men
- * to encourage women writers to write for and about women and thereby create a greater range of themes, plots and non-stereotypical roles for women performers
- * to provide an often denied opportunity for women to work together in an atmosphere of mutual self-respect



Woman in Silence No 1, Barbara London, photographed by John Jones

in order

- to develop, refine and extend their ideas and craft, in a critical but supportive manner
- * to give public representation, promotion of, and support for the work of women in the performing arts

Nichole Fawcett suggested a benefit concert, which would help us overcome some of the conditioned competitiveness between those for whom there is a limited field, to get to know each other, to put some money in the kitty until we heard the outcome of our application for a Limited Life Grant from the Theatre Board. The benefit was enormously popular, celebratory, exhilarating. In December, the Theatre Board announced a grant of \$100,000 to embark upon our aims. The concept of Limited Life Grants, in general, is bold and challenging; they support the essential nature of theatre — that it is a collaborative art form. For women,

particularly, the concept fits well with our perceived necessity to challenge collectively the representation (in both senses) of women in theatre. The Theatre Board took up this challenge, and during the year we will be working on a number of means to achieve our aims: playreadings, workshops, intensive groups working to a theme, pre-production activity.

In February, the Women and Theatre Project ran a series of free playreadings of new works by Australian women writers. While it is up to theatre critics to review them, it is nevertheless worth noting that the response was overwhelming. We turned away between 50 and 150 people at each reading, some of whom had to come far (Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle) or against great odds ("I have never driven across the Bridge before, but desperately wanted to come", "My children are at home without a babysitter"). Perhaps some of the major theatres might learn from this exercise, for though our more cynical critics argue that audiences for these readings are "artificial, one off audiences", they are readings, not productions, and they are plays

unheard of before. It does suggest a hunger for writing, directing, acting by women. We will continue to read new works throughout the year, and run another series of public readings in December.

Meanwhile, the first of the intensive groups began work together in early March, running through until May. Nine full-timers (Valerie Bader, Beverly Blankenship, Suzanne Dudley, Jenny Hope, Gillian Hyde, Deborah Kennedy, Chrissie Kotia, Jenny Ludlam and Louise Perry), a musician-in-residence (Sarah de Jong) and three major tutors (Dorcha Bhahora, Jude Kuring and Janine Smeel) will work on new form and content for women in theatre through comedy and music. A second intensive project for another group of women will run later in the year.

We have allocated our first round of development monies to Fay Maketow to workshop and develop Alison Lyman's play *Probaal* to Kerry Dwyer, Elizabeth Drake and Gillian Jones to develop her two works *Passengers In Overcoats* and *Andresia Somewhere*, to Cathy Downes to write, within a country and western framework, an

expose of the cultural propaganda sanctioned through the form of expression, to Chrissie Kotia and Jenny Ludlam for a play on prostitution. A second round will follow later in the year.

In March, we began workshops covering an enormous range of ideas and activities from "Dealing With Agents" to "Contracts and Copyright", from examining the portrayal of women on stage and screen to movement skills, from "Applying For Grants" to stage fights, from mask work to commedia dell'arte.

The response to the energy and ideas of the group has been so strong that we have been forced, reluctantly, to close our numbers for new membership. If we did not, meetings would be so unwieldy that we would not be able to learn the process of decision-making as well as do it effectively, our workshops would be so over-crowded as to be useless. We feel that already, we are having some effect on awareness in theatre companies of the rights of women. We know that, at the end of the year, we will have made major inroads on the problem facing women in a male-dominated society.

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INTERNATIONAL

U.K.

Missing the artistic process

by Irving Wardle

We must have a keen interest in the lives of the artist over here, otherwise writers and managers would stop battering their heads against the old biographical stone wall, namely that the main reason for concerning such lives — the artistic process itself — is the one thing that cannot be shown on stage.

Attempts to get around this have advanced before the "Bella Haskin, how's 'Wordworth'?" stage, but still without cracking the central riddle. Even from *Amadeus* you don't learn much about Mozart the composer, without whose work Peter Shaffer would never have bothered to write the play. And now witness Edna O'Brien's *Virginia*, a hit of last year's Ontario Festival, gloriously transferred to the Haymarket as a double homecoming for our best comic actors, Maggie Smith, and her director Robin Phillips.

I'll say this for the show: it's a cut above the West End's last nod on the literary twines in Peter Luke's *Blossoms*, a vulgar celebrity round-up for those who might have confused Mrs Woolf with the author of Orlando's Maps. *Virginia* What we get from Miss O'Brien is an intimate portrait skilfully based on close reading of the voluminous Bloomsbury archives and directed to spectators who can stay up every glowing reference to Nessa, Clive, Lytton, Maynard, and Butler, and who do not need to be told that she spent much of her time operating a printing press — much less that she ever set down to write a book.

Instead, we get snapshots of her social and domestic life, underpinned by the fear of madness and a longing for sexual intercourse. A high speed tour of childhood (vividly and strongly characterising her father as selfish and stringy) leads on to her escape to Gordon Square where free life and free speech begin when Lytton

So racy gets away with more on one screen in mixed company, jealous fury at her sister's marriage is followed by her own stormy copulation to the stolid, pipe-smoking Leonard, and thence to the years of creative isolation in Rodinell interspersed with literary parties in Tavistock Square. Even with suicide to round things off, it is not much of a story, and Miss O'Brien has been unable to resist the lure of the one succulent interlude in this otherwise book-ridden existence: the heroine's instant-fling with Victoria Sachville-West. Like Miss O'Brien's novels, in other words, *Virginia* tells the story of a fragile, doom-haunted personality, briefly coming into flower under the warming rays of an illicit love-affair. The real Mrs Woolf would have had her stiletto unsheathed long before then you can say "Connegion".

Altogether it is as apt the most festive route for Maggie Smith who goes through the evening in a long dark skirt, heavy hands thrust into the pockets of an eternal cardigan. What this costume does supply is

a black canvas for the actress to fill, and there are some amazing transformations as she sheds and gains years, switches between the suburban ingenue and the derriere diva, and leaps trembling onto a dance floor to be yanked into a charleston by an invincible partner.

Playing in front of a set of tall translucent screens, simultaneously evoking a conservatory and a desolate museum, Mr Phillips's company of three adopt a convention of pained slow-motion, which seems designed to magnify the play's double time scale: the prime of years and minutes ticking away simultaneously. You cannot fault the style, except to say that it adds to the bloodless language of the proceedings.

"Important art is about us. Great art is about me. I hate paint give me ink." So says the cartoonist hero of Howard Barker's *No End of Mine*, a bizarre television play expanded on commission from the adventurous management of the Oxford Playhouse. In its stage form, the piece sets out to examine the lives of two Hungarian artists from their wartime experiences in 1918 to their last meeting in a London mental hospital 35 years later. And from the opening scene of a battlefield life class, it does seem that this time we are brought a bit closer to the creative process, with Grigor (the lone artist) vividly sketching a terrified nude girl who cowers when Bela (the cartoonist) advances on the model intending to rape her.

Thereafter, art yields to politics. After one scene in the Budapest Institute, Grigor drops out of the picture leaving Bela in sole command of the play, and the cartoon-fine art theme gives way to an exploration of artistic freedom. Bela's mission is to speak the truth. "Where can he do it?" The action follows his long pilgrimage through the Russia of the New Economic Policy and the Centralist 1930s, and his ultimate emigration to England where he blossoms under the name of "Victor" for a mass production daily, before being supplanted in the 1950s by a new boy who can make the propagandist laugh.

So far as England is concerned, "Victor" seems to be based on Vicky (of the Evening Standard) and Donald Zec (of the Mirror), whose famous wartime cartoon of a dying ranchman sulor on a storm-battered mill, captioned "The price of petrol has been increased by one penny official", supplies his main collision with Whitehall officials. The key Russian scene shows him being grilled by an apologetic committee of the Writers and Artists



Maggie Smith as Edna O'Brien's Virginia
Photo: Joe Demme

Emcee, and disconcertingly agreeing to tear up an anti-Lesbian cartoon.

Barker writes complementary scenes rather than fully articulated plots, and his technique of moving supernatural figures (such as a KGB snapper or a Parliamentary sea lady) into central positions effectively transposes a societal viewpoint into dramatic processes. It yields some richly ambiguous passages, in which Bole celebrates his decision to quit Russia by stamping on a floral tribute to Stalin, only to be shamed by a cry from the outraged goddess "That's my art!" But of the key scenes outlined above, neither does much to support the idea of the vagrant State citizenship implied by Paul Power's performance of the grimy suspense artist, and it is left to Gerald Scarfe's demonstrably brilliant back projection to convey just what the truth is that he is so keen to impart.

U.S.A.

Classical Clambake

by Karl Lewitt

The presentation of classic plays in America is a continuing problem. Advanced education (or what you will) has certainly created a desire for American Theatre companies to mount such plays as well as sufficient audience to pay attention and ticket money. Nothing, however, is the theatrical training of most American actors. Let alone American directors — prepared for the demands and discipline of classical theatre.

The result is an ambition — but without any of the means to achieve it. One hand generously gives, while the other (as it so frequently takes away. The best one can hope for is a opportunity in a fashion of vision that will replace the conventional values. With rich new production one keeps hoping that this will be the one to break the barrier, to shed the new light. On recent evidence Godot will probably arrive before this happens.

Shakespeare is the most revered, ergo, he has to suffer the most slings and arrows of inept productions. Three examples have recently been on view in New York.

The newly-formed Lincoln Center Theatre Company promised a Marbeth with vibrant young leads — a love story at



Ruth Wilson and Eva La Salle as *To Grandmother's House We Go*

last — plus the theatrical debut of famed conductor and opera director Sarah Caldwell. The Vivian Beaumont Theatre is a large and difficult space, but it was hoped McCalldwell might conquer this. There are a couple of pleasing operatic touches, such as Marbeth's costumes, but Mr Caldwell has chosen a set that puts a curse on the whole production — a sort of *Son of Swenney Todd* with its high iron bridge and steep flights of steps (the Bridge of Sighs, and the Steps of Ambition?). For the sleepwalking scene, there's a conveniently wheeled on spiral staircase that would

seriously quickly do its occupant's nightmare.

Marbeth is Philip Angles who came to recent fame as the Elephant Man. His performance is played only as an example of too much, too soon. Along with other dilemmas is a curiously inappropriate dance — a telt told by a blinking countenance, signifying nothing. Maureen Anderson is a sensible and attractive actress, a Lady Macbeth. While she has a much stronger grip on her role, eventually she too is exposed by insufficient experience of a story kind.

The Circle Repertory's *Ford's Night* lacks in fancy lighting and a sure of mere goodwill. As directed by playwright David Mamet, it is a comic book Shakespeare, with complete disregard (or ignorance) of the play's shadows. There is a commendable emphasis of clarity of meaning, but as a result there are passages you could miss a large vehicle through and a part that is historical. This could possibly be the reason that Malvolio is dressed as an undertaker.

Indeed the costumes are symptomatic of the production's hit and miss attitude. The night of styles include Westport, Treasure Island, Amtrak Railroad, The Beach, Bohemian and Radio City Music Hall. From it on Fifth Collegiate and the pacing allowed for running on "Fette Goes To College".

The one stillborn in all this confusion is Lindsey Croun's Viola. Even dressed as a refugee from Radio City, the charm, Pert and poise, she is like a better-day Helen Hayes, providing a credence to the sophisticated goings-on around her. Malvolio is played by the Circle Rep's Artistic Director, Marshall W. Mason and on the evidence shown here a look should



London, Crossing Flinders in *Circle Steps*. Twelfth Night. Photo: Gerry Goodwin

be placed miraculously on the front office to prevent further indulgent strayings.

The first production of the BAM Theatre Company's second season is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Last season BAM, under the direction of David Jones (one of the London's BBCs), looked as if it could be a turning point in the building of an American classical company. How disappointing to learn this year to find that many of the more talented company members have gone and been replaced by much lesser mortals. We have the spectre of a disengaged English director contending with inexperienced American actors in pulling the four threads of the *Dream* together. Midsummer madness becomes midwinter sadness. Mercenary actresses and the only very occasionally performance is Brian Murray's Oberon.

The performance brought forth questions swirling over each other: Where have all the actors gone? Why? Was it money? Was it the discipline? Were these the best actors available as replacements for a reputable company? If they are, where do we go learn here? Whatever the answers, it's a distressing business.



Norlene Anderson and Philip Anglin in the Lincoln Center's Macbeth. Photo: Roger Greenwald

The Circle in the Square under Artistic Director Theodore Mann has long had a policy of consistently presenting classic plays. The most recent offering is Ibsen's *Jules Gabriel Barkman* with E.G. Marshall in the title role and Irene Worth and Rosemary Murphy as the women in his high-life life. Ibsen's study of the loss of power versus the power of love is here given a distinct enough showing under Aaron Pendleton's direction, although the Circle in the Square's satisfactory acting area (an oblong area) continues to thwart any really creative effort. The play does provide three great roles. E.G. Marshall is enough too pedestrian as Barkman and nowhere suggests the mad visionary Ibsen created. Rosemary Murphy is not forever!

enough for the high-tipped Gershwins, and too attractive to lose Irene Worth's Elia, however, makes the whole evening worthwhile. She conveys warmth, good sense and beauty without a trace of the sentimental. Ms. Worth is one of the treasures of the English-speaking stage and we only hope that her talent will not be dimmed by the shabby mediocrity of American reveals of classic parts.

Another Elia (circa 1938, Civic Repertory Company) is Eva Le Gallienne, an American classic in her own right. Ms. Le Gallienne is currently on Broadway in *To Grandmother's House We Go* by Canadian-born Joanna M. Glass. The play deals with a problem as the increase in

affluent American circles, grown children, short on self-reliance, returning to the nest for emotional comfort and monetary assistance. Ms. Le Gallienne is the grandmother of this weak-kneed bunch and it is well making all the necessary family decisions. In the second act Ms. Le Gallienne is required to die. By then she has cast such a spell of charm over the characters (and the audience) that the well made play can hardly a harsh the shock and almost steps died in its own tracks.

I kept thinking — all that grace, all that force, all that technique at 88 plus. Where are the future Le Galliennes going to come from? Looking beyond the recent darkness, the horizon is sadly empty.

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WELCOME

The present ITI Board members, Ruth Cranknell, Jeffrey Johnston-Smith, Harry Kippas, and Neil Lushwood, decided at their last meeting to invite the following active theatre professionals to join the Board, in order that it be representative of the various branches of theatre, according to the ITI Charter.

Ruth Bain, choreographer
Elizabeth Butler/John Clark, theatre training

John Gagen, actor-director

Shaun Gorman, designer

Sarah de Jong, composer

Loren Novak, playwright-dramatist

Robert Page, editor-producer-lecturer

They have all accepted the invitation and we welcome their future help and advice.

As from now the playwright, Alison Lyons, succeeds the actress, Glenda Livwood, as Secretary-Editor of the Australian Centre. Glenda has left for an extended visit to the U.K. *Bon Voyage!*

COMIC POSTERS WANTED

Bulgaria's House of Humour and Satire is mounting an exhibition of COMEDY POSTERS during May, 1981. The institute, dedicated to the "typicalisation of the Humour of Nations", would like to display Australian posters of comedy productions — new and old. Please send contributions from your theatre to Stefan Panteleov, Director, House of Humour and Satire, PO Box 106, 5300 Gabrovo, Bulgaria.

THE LIVING THEATRE

Directors Julian Beck and Julian Beck announce a US tour of the Living Theatre, Autumn 1981-Winter 1982. The works in repertory are: E.Rose Toller's *Mad Men* (also *The Mammals*); an adaptation of *Prometheus*, and a revival of *Amorpha* (the Beck's version). All productions are designed for professional stage. Residences will include lectures, workshops, and films of earlier Living Theatre works such as *Paradise Now* and *The Org.* For information:

The Living Theatre,
Box 734, Times Square Sta.
New York, N.Y. 10036
Tel. (212) 929-0336

or

The Living Theatre,
via Gasta, 79
00195 Roma, Italy
Tel. (011-396) 476-1194

STUDENTS ABROAD

Some Dutch theatre students are organised in the working group, "Drama International", aiming to give information to academy students on dramatic education abroad, festivals, congresses and other activities in the field of amateur, students and professional theatre.

They do this to stimulate the students to go abroad and to take cognizance of other views on drama.

To be able to do this they require information on dramatic schooling in Australia. All kinds of info will be welcome, like brochures about festivals, letters about drama schools, descriptions of your own experiences and those of others, etc.

Their address is:
Janderkirkhof 11,
Postbus 470
3300 AR Utrecht
NETHERLANDS

FILM

Women's Films

by Elizabeth Risdell

The Australian Film Institute's presentation of a package of five films by women, all backed by the Women's Film Fund (administered by the Creative Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission) should help convince exhibitors that local short features not only deserve commercial showing, but would do their audience figures some good.

The films run between 16 minutes and 39 minutes and share a common factor — although differing widely in subject and style — in that they do effectively what they set out to do. They also share a quiet noticeable strength and firmness of direction, in other words, a command of the medium. (There is one exception to this.)

The Moving Pictures package is made up of *Consolation Prize*, *Flamingo Park*, *Age Before Beauty*, *Chloë* and *Personal Armes*, presented in that order. All are graded G except for *Consolation Prize* which rates an M. Which brings us at once to *Consolation Prize*, the exception mentioned above. This is a funny little film, but so fun it is producible, and it suffers, like the character of Sally Shamblin which it seems to find lovable, from too much of everything. Sally is a clown with genuinely Chaplinesque failed-lifted-the-party attributes, but 25 minutes stretches the joke too far and too often. Sally is played by Rinka Hartman who also wrote, directed and part-directed *Consolation Prize*. The film is a perfect illustration of the axiom that more is less. Perhaps someone was needed to tell the exuberantly talented Rinka Hartman when to stop.

Clytie Jerrup's first Australian film, *Flamingo Park*, is more a celebration than an exploration, almost all strong colour and movement and sound, with mercurially brief excursions into explanation and asides. Linda Jackson and Jenny Roe, whose business of designing and making wildly beautiful clothes is the subject of the 16 minute film, are no better at explaining themselves than are most artists, who usually sound banal and confused when trying to discuss the how and why of what they do. Clytie Jerrup's production and

direction expresses her experience as an artist and a mistress as well as her talent as a filmmaker. The film has great pace and verve, and the camera work of the dress parade (by Martha Ansara, Jan Kenny, Tom Cowan and Linda Addis) makes a splendid contrast to the quiet, precise glimpses of women knitting and of Linda Jackson laying out her fabric figures.

There could be nothing less like *Flamingo Park* or *Consolation Prize* than *Age Before Beauty*, a look (which does not remind me of any other film, but of a book called *The Five In Winter* by Ronald Blythe, published last year) at what people think of ageing women, and what the ageing women think of people thinking that way. It is produced by Susan Lambert, a director of the Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative and a former member of the editorial board of *Spree* '86, and directed by Sarah Gibson, a former teacher in alternative high schools. Together they made *Size 40* which won a Blue Ribbon award at the 1979 American Film Festival, and many documentaries including the experimental *Behind Closed Doors*. Old age for women in Australia, and perhaps everywhere, is a bad joke — because women are conditioned to think of themselves as failures once they lose their physical attractiveness, and old age as "horrible". The Gibson-Lambert film is positive, enlightening, sophisticated (for

want of a better word) perceptive, sometimes funny and on the whole cheerful, and it is extremely well made. It may not be one that a commercial exhibitor would choose first from this package, but as Jani Thornley wrote in *Film News*, there will be plenty of people of all ages who will want to see it.

Rosaleen Gallagher's *Chloë* (26 minutes) is an original and beautiful film, the antithesis of everything people think of when they are confronted with a ballet film. She has made a drama in which the actors do not speak or strike attitudes or move about a stage, but simply dance within an environment created by camera, lighting and a few simple tricks of costume, all in close-up, minutely observed so that each stretched toe or graceful arm is a step in the story. The film uses the account of Moemi Everett by a party of Japanese women in 1975 as a metaphor for women's struggle for liberation. The choreography is by Margaret Barr, with whose dance group Rosaleen Gallagher studied, to the music of "Mountains and Rivers Without End", by Alan Hovhaness. Lighting camera are by Martha Ansara (again). The lead dancer is exquisite Lin Kahn but all the dancers, male and female, are commendable. *Chloë* was awarded a richly-deserved Silver Plaque at the 1980 Chicago International Dance Film Festival and was screened at the 1980 Sorrento Film Festival (where the theme was Australian film) and the International Festival of Music and Choreography at Bourdeaux, France.

Of the five films, the one that has received the most publicity and will continue to receive the most, because of the built-in sympathy it will command and because this is the International Year of the Disabled, is Gena Rastarshan's *Pass and Armes* (36 minutes) written and produced by Gena and directed by Barbara Chubbuck, who has a good track record in short features. *Pass and Armes* is an almost-horror film, but it has aspects of self-indulgence than, for instance, *Shooting Out* (reviewed earlier) has not. Both films are about mutilation of the body and heart. *Pass and Armes* has already demonstrated its success by picking up awards at film festivals in the US and Canada.

With these five films, reviewers (and the public) are faced with, again, film as an art or craft form and film with a message, or a point of view or message is too loaded a word. But the two may be combined and I have to say that I think *Chloë* is the one to have done it best.



Flamingo Park by Clytie Jerrup

OPERA

The States of Opera

by Justin Macdonnell

How history in the arts repeats itself. In introducing the opera section in the 1977 *Performing Arts Year Book* I had cause to remark:

"1977 was a remarkable year in many ways for opera in Australia. Taken from one point of view, it resembles nothing so much as a birth and death column. Three of the four major companies changed direction in some quite fundamental way."

Looking back on 1980 and forward to the prospects for 1981, it is beginning to seem, as someone once almost said of Australian television, not so much that we have had five years of opera in Australia but one year five times over.

The combination of gloom and optimism current in 1977 still permeated neither element is likely to prevail lightly.

In May last year the committee appointed to inquire into the state of opera and music theatre in Australia brought down an excellent report. It was widely acclaimed at the time and could certainly stand as a model of its type for detail, lucidity and forthrightness. It even looked for a moment as though it might signal a new age of coherent planning and co-operation in the most storm-tossed area of the performing arts in this country. The clouds soon died away.

To date, although the report has been adopted in principle by the Australia Council it has not been considered by Federal cabinet and, accordingly, its financial implications for improved funding of companies (with one major unswerving exception) remain dormant.

That exception is the Victoria State Opera (VSO) where after a rather uneasy display of brinkmanship which must have left them quite breathless, they have secured what are euphemistically termed "guarantees against loss" from both the Council and the Victorian government up to the level of \$135,000 each which while they bring the VSO close to the funding recommended in the Report, are quite contrary to the intention of the Committee of Inquiry in urging that the opera sector should advance as a whole rather than in the very piecemeal fashion which is so clearly occurring. In contrast

to the strong spirit of co-operation between companies through which one had hoped to see an orderly development of all opera in Australia based on an agreed partnership between state and federal funding authorities.

What, in context, occurred is that rightly or wrongly the VSO believed that they had received an undertaking from both the Australia Council and the Victorian government that they would restore in 1981 the level of funding to develop the company into the full-time year-round operation which had been recommended in the Report. It remains a mystery why the



Patrick Vachon, Gen. GM of the Australian Opera

VSO should have been told any such thing when every other company was firmly given to understand that no action could be taken until federal cabinet had considered and, hopefully, adopted the Report.

What underlining the Victorian government gives on its own behalf to a state company is surely its own business and one can only applaud it for acting so promptly in recognition of the Report. But for officers of the Council to have unilaterally made such a statement is a clear breach of the understanding which they had with all other companies. Equally, it is bizarre to think that they would have done so knowing that in the circumstances prevailing at the time, they could not honour it except by disadvantageing other opera companies.

The result is that Railferry's rules prevail.

The VSO proceeded to programme 1981 on the basis of this "betrayal". All other companies proceeded on the opposite assumption, namely, that in 1981 it was unlikely that the funding aspect of the Report could be implemented since officers of the Council had made it abundantly clear to them that in order to do so the federal government would have to make a specific additional contribution for that purpose.

All hopes for an orderly co-operative development perished once it was demonstrated that by creating a sufficient crisis it proved possible for any one company to kick outside the agreed system and ensure not only that they could get their own way but also that someone else would lose in the process. In this case it was the Australian Opera whose grant from the Victorian government was reduced an actual dollar term from \$150,000 in 1980 to \$200,000 in 1981. Although one is now suggesting that the government simply transferred \$10,000 from one company to the other, clearly in the balancing of the books that is, in effect, what has happened and, moreover, in a manner entirely at odds with the principle of "due notice" of reduction of funding which has been one of the few stable elements available for companies in forward planning.

It is ironic that the VSO's immediate tactics were cranked against the back-ground of the sad demise of their northern cousins, the Queensland Opera Company, which had for so long been led by John Thompson, a gentleman who always "played the game" and who personally modelled an efficient creative cheapness underfunded and overstriched.

In February of last year the state government had installed a new Board and, giving them a "once off" grant of \$150,000 charged them with the responsibility of re-organising the company and preparing a set of recommendations for its future. Late in the year that Board presented the government so concerned in affairs and the Queensland Opera Company ceased to exist.

A steering committee consisting of representatives of the former Board of the Opera together with representatives of the largely amateur-based but very energetic Queensland Light Opera, with an independent chairman are currently deliberating the future prospects for professional opera in that state.

It is understood that funds have been set aside for a renewal of activity and the state

government continues to refuse its determination to have a professional opera company capable of performing in the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, currently under construction on the south bank of the Brisbane River, the opening of which in September 1982 is monolithically close if a new company is to be formed from scratch.

But it is not only funding matters that have been adversely affected by the neglect of the Report.

Excellent proposals in a four advanced training programme for young singers — desperately needed in the light of the present shortages in which changing teaching and opera training in conservatoria and music schools find themselves — are no further advanced. The stimulating ideas for an involvement fund to promote the production and performance of new musicals and other forms of music theatre have fallen — as far as one can tell — on very money ground indeed. A similar fate has befallen the suggestion that the Australian Opera might broaden its own repertoire by including a judicious selection of musicals and operetta.

Despite several high-level meetings between the rival protagonists, the fate of the Sydney and Melbourne-based Elizabeth Trust orchestras — key elements in the future of opera in this country — is not much closer to solution. It is reasonable to suppose, that at some time in the future still to be determined, the Sydney orchestra will, without excessive relocation come under the umbrella of the Australian Opera as legal disputes it should always have been.

On the other hand in Melbourne — as with all things operative in that city — the case is far from clear. The Australian Ballet, the Victorian State Opera and the Australian Opera — all of whom have major vested interests in the question — continue to be locked in dispute as to who gets what in the carve up. The original recommendation had been that the orchestra go to the Ballet. This proposal was only disturbed by the VSO who saw themselves doomed forever to perform with "venetian bands" but was unacceptable to the players themselves deemed to perform a limited ballet repertoire on endless tours.

No real solution is in sight. The final wash up will, no doubt, be a patchwork of compromise in which the major casualty will, as always, be performing standards.

If things have stagnated undisturbed, change at the top has been very much in the air. Both Western Australian and South Australian companies have acquired new musical directors in the persons of Gerald Krag and Dennis Vaughan respectively, while Myer Friedman, who had been responsible for putting Adelaide's State

Opera on the map has gone to head the Opera School at the NSW Conservatorium. It is to be hoped that he will be able to bring some much needed order and professional status to the troubled situation to the benefit of opera as a whole.

Each of these was effected in an orderly dignified fashion. On the only other hand, no single appointment within the arts in Australia can ever have been accompanied by such a blaze of publicity as has heralded the engagement of the new General Manager of the Australian Opera. After fifteen months of what would have been a totally sadder less existence, had it not been for the urbane and kindly amiable presence of Ron Tribe as management coordinator, and after a series of steps and stunts, which no matter how they are glossed over remain a farce, a decision has been made. Every stage of the negotiations was conducted in the glare of media scrutiny. Every supportive contender's name was publicly noted abroad in a storm of " leaks" which in their eagerness, frequency and potential to embarrass not only the company but the applicants resulted in a micromanaged day-long day of the McMahon government. Finally Mr Patrick Veach from the Metropolitan Opera in New York was awarded the " prize", a prize it be

For once no stronger to those shown and the inner workings of the company he is to administer. Mr Veach comes with an intimate understanding of many of the most acute problems which currently afflict it, namely its public image, its marketing, fund-raising and planning strategies — especially as they affect its position outside of Sydney — and its ability to hold its own in an entertainment industry of increasing complexity and competition.

There is an early indication of this very fact. At the somewhat lapidary press conference called to " announce" what anyone who had cared to read the preceding week's newspapers already knew, was his appointment. Mr Veach stated amongst other things, that he wished to give high priority to the question of making opera performance more widely available to the public through the medium of television. Nothing particularly new in that. Management is all the performing arts have been paying lip-service to that idea since the IAC inquiry pointed out to them that television existed, though to be fair, the Australian Opera has made efforts in that direction — a couple of them even moderately successful.

But wonder of wonders, Mr Veach also talks about the changing technology of television production including the rapid emergence of the home video-cassette industry and its potential not only as a

means of high quality entertainment in the home but also as a potential source of revenue for his company?

If he succeeds, in that alone he will have justified his appointment.

Regrettably, however, he has more to accomplish than this. Despite a plethora of reports and counter-reports, some less important than others, essential structural problems remain. In a recent rebuttal of the Opera report, the Board of the Australian Opera clearly telegraphed that like the restored Bourbon after Napoleon they had " learnt nothing and forgotten nothing".

The media representatives who attended the press conference for Veach and the public who read and listened to there were no doubt hurried to hear the profuse expressions of goodwill between the General Manager-Designate, the Musical Director and the Chairman and fully realise, I believe, that no elaboration of future working relations between them, contractual agreements or company structure will mean anything without that goodwill. But until such time as it is demonstrated to the opera-going public and to the satisfaction ultimately of the taxpayer, these statements can only be measured alongside the many similar professions heard over the past few years, some of which have proven to be not entirely in accordance with the facts. One can only wish them well and hope, generally, that things have changed.

On the other side of the comment, the Western Australian Opera Company has over the past year and despite acute isolation and a small population, demonstrated that it can draw a substantial audience to its work. No doubt its occupancy of the recently refurbished His Majesty's Theatre will do much to stimulate this process further as will the appointment of its experienced Music Director, Gerald Krag. The company opened its new home with what, in the event, proved to be a rather indifferent production of *La Traviata* but one which drew capacity houses from an otherwise opera-starved Perth. If, as seems likely, the company can use its platform of present achievements to further develop its musical and dramatic standards, there is no reason why it should not thrive. A 1981 repertoire which includes such popular pieces as *La Bohème*, *The Tales of Hoffmann* and *Falstaff* should give it a fine opportunity to do so.

In South Australia the situation remains both stable and yet potentially of concern. Every two years the State Opera has excelled in producing as a highlight of the Adelaide Festival a major modern masterpiece in a way which has turned not only Australian but international attention to

n. There is no reason to suppose that the 1982 Festival will be any different.

In the intervening periods, however, despite some good work and always fascinating choice of programmes, it is no secret that the company has experienced a decline in its audience from a highpoint in 1977. It is not one of those who would automatically attribute this solely to the unusual nature of some of the works presented over the past four years such as *Warrior*, *One Man Show* and *Land of Swindlers*, although the management itself has assembled some impressive statistics to support that view. In accordance with them, the company has programmed in 1981 a much more "conservative" selection of *Caravan*, *Back of the Hand* and *La Strada* and a revival of their highly successful *MMS Playhouse*. It will be interesting to see the extent to which this shift of emphasis (since the company has always programmed a selection of such pieces) will make to box office receipts.

The Melbourne situation, as mentioned previously, is the most complicated in the country. Complicated in the first instance by the fact that the Australian Opera maintains a major presence there which in 1981 will total ten productions over two seasons including five new to Melbourne audiences with the VSO producing five (three new) for a total of fifteen productions (eight new) as compared with Sydney's two seasons of sixteen productions (seven new). In the widest terms no one could seriously claim that Melbourne is not being well-served as and certainly to be the case not long ago. But is it now too much?

The VSO have publicly agreed that it is and that Melbourne's potential audience is not yet large or diversified enough to justify it. The low rate of subscription renewals for the 1981 season would, on the face of it, support that view. It is, however, conceivable that at least a proportion of the shortfall reflects the very real disinclination felt by subscribers in 1979 and 1980 over the constantly changing patterns of subscription available to them, stating difficulties and problems encountered with the introduction of computerised subscription handling.

Perhaps there have indeed and even to seek smaller packages of performances or even single ticket purchases. The fact that it has not been possible for either company to fix a firm date for their occupancy of the venue within the Victorian Arts Centre has, no doubt, not helped their marketing drive. A couple of straw polls have indicated that it is probably a combination of all of these factors but it is clear that a much more sustained marketing campaign over a longer period was required to develop Sydney audiences to the level which someone seems to have assumed can

happen virtually overnight in Melbourne. Events seem likely to prove that person wrong.

The situation in Melbourne is analogous to that the VSO alone of the state companies grew up in the shadow of the Australian Opera's huge scale annual visit. In order to achieve an increased public profile and, because just sub-



Richard Woodward as Pavarotti in the State Opera's *Angels*, an original MMS Production

scriptions with state companies were the order of the day, it entered into a basis of convenience which has become something of an inflated earnings from which neither party can easily withdraw without potentially upsetting the whole apple cart. A divorce at this stage could have far-reaching implications for both. The Australian Opera needs a substantial presence in Melbourne in order to justify its public subsidy and, to a lesser extent, its sponsorship commitments, as well as to earn box office and to provide the economies of scale necessary to enable it to programme a sufficient number of new productions annually in both cities which will make its subscription packages attractive and diverse enough to retain its audience base.

The VSO, if it withdrew entirely from the arrangement would not only lose a guaranteed proportion of the joint box office but would find itself, at the very moment of crucial growth, in competition with the Australian Opera for the same audience. While it might win the local "sympathy vote" to a certain extent, it is doubtful if it could match as large and more established colleague in direct promotional muscle or expertise.

It's a vicious circle and one can only hope that goodwill may prevail. Both companies have so much to offer Melbourne and its audiences. The Victorian State Opera under Richard Davall has been responsible for the introduction of many works which would otherwise not have been seen, including in Sydney *Admetos*, *Pelléas and Melisande* and *The Pearl Fishers* have been significant coups for a small emerging, fragile company. On the other hand the Australian Opera has borne the brunt of expense in time and money in developing an audience there and there is no doubt that its own standards would suffer if it were cut off, prematurely, from its second base.

Ultimately, however, the very real test can be "pro bono publico" and this attitude appears to have become a little lost in the melee.

To sum up. Let us hope that in 1981 we may at least see a serious consideration of the Opera Report and, despite personal differences, that its positive recommendations may prevail, that someone comes firmly to grips with the "Melbourne situation" at both operatic and orchestral levels, that for the benefit of all Australians, 75% of whom indicated in the Australian Council's ANOP survey that they supported the presence in our society of publicly funded opera and operetta, we may see the beginnings of a genuine partnership between opera and television (whether through the public or private sectors) and the emergence of a confident basis for development in the next five years.

Boheme and Beggar's Opera

by Ken Hensley

A god's eye view from one of the best seats in the stalls during the Australian Opera's summer season at the Sydney Opera House calls up the imagery of Revelation Alpha and Omega, repeatedly speaking, one surely first and last nights respectively. Having added the closing performance of *La Boheme* to the final Don Giovanni (reviewed last month), I pronounced the AO an Opera company.

This incarnation of a *Boheme*, the sets and costumes of which have clothed a legion of singers since it first appeared in 1970, is the most satisfying of the many I have seen. Without any single element of greatness — again from that provided by Puccini — it demonstrates the wisdom of casting a masterwork from strength, entrusting it to a thoughtful producer and inviting a true maestro into the pit.

Conductor Cilario here provided the musical coherence that he was still seeking on the first night of *Orfeo* in January. Lacking a sufficient body of strings to produce convincing orchestral sounds, he showed why he is regarded as a singer's conductor, every big emotional moment was pecked out with nuance of orchestral colour and texture. It remained only for the singers to supply the musical foreground. Cilario even allows singers

their traditional breaks for applause without seeming to detract the integrity of Puccini's score, an great achievement.

Producer Andrew Sinclair showed his quality with a bustling, exciting stage picture at the Café Mamma, kept the memorable high jinks of the four bohemians in the garret just before Mimì's final, tragic entrance, and awarded a traditional ending by having her expire in bed. Earlier versions played in this wonderfully Parisian set of designer Linwood had offended the conservative taste by positioning Mimì in a chair for her last consumptive gasp.

In what is ultimately a singers' opera, we were fortunate in our Mimì, Gloria Fowles, who first created the role in this series of productions in 1970. A beautiful young woman with a clear lyric voice, she is no more a naturally gifted actor than her Rudolfo, Anson Austin. But finding a better looking pair with voices of appropriate weight, and willing to take direction would be unlikely in any opera house.

Fowles is now at her best in the lower register, where she can achieve a ghostly sweetness without missing in loss of clarity. Unhappily, the main bar top by employing a jaw-induced vibrato, particularly upsetting in the love duets with Anson at his upper register has grown in strength and beauty, far from the BBC chorus voice which he used to put under such strain in romantic songs.

For *Boheme* to succeed at the level of this performance, all of the other (and lesser) to say minor principals must be right for their roles. The deeper voiced men, Allan, Shanks and Myers, are a trio

of vocal heavyweights who might threaten dramatic buoyancy, not to mention sexual balance. That they do not do so is a cause for celebration. Wearing capacious straight brown hair and a thick, slightly drooping moustache, Robert Allan gave us a Latin Marcello, part Italian, part French. In the opera in Australia, the blond is near to perfect. The power of his voice, the strength of his physique, and the eloquence of his singing string were adequate defence against the onslaught of his spiffier of a Marcello, Rhonda Bruce. In age, voice type, and stage presence she is the Marcello closest to ideal type in a mixed group which, since 1970, has included Beryl Forlan, Erika Pina, Suzanne Steele and Elizabeth Preveel.

So fully has her Donald Shanks assumed the role of the philosopher Coline that I can now hardly imagine anyone else portraying a Andrew Sinclair's production of Raymond Myers as a handsome, medium-camp musician. Schumann, we felt. We were also given a dour, Jewish landlord, grubbing for his rent by David Solomon, and an Alcindoro holding back from caricature in the person of Peter van der Stoep.

For me the single flat spot in the production, and probably in the opera itself, occurs in the third act, in the snow at La Barrière d'Orléans. Linwood merely stated the stage picture, placing behind a line, black gown, and then used Fowles and Austin, singing in dramatic bleakness. Puccini's librettists ask us to believe that Rudolfo, who alone knows that Mimì is dying, affects to turn and go away to break the tension. His real motive is gain that the cold air squaller of his room is hastening her demerolisation.

Great operas like *La Boheme* withstand mediocre presentation, becoming wondrous in a very good performance such as this one. What to say about *The Beggar's Opera*? Should we see it as a night piece, long a rare man as political satire. Or is it a challenging stage for a company of actors some of whom can sing a little, in the hands of a lively director and an inventive designer? Can it provide a skeleton for a vast body of music?

Even *Boheme* all but disappeared when shrunk by Ross McGregor at Canberra Rep a few years ago into a vehicle for a cigar-smoking plot of a Miami, accompanied by piano, flute and cello. Richard Bonyngs has in a sense turned the telescope around on *The Beggar's Opera*, infusing it with the values of de Mille, Balanchowicz, Dece and marionettes. I am afraid that it will not bear scrutiny in this enlargement, where every beggar's pose must be a Vesuvius amply lavished by the products of Helmut Rubinstein.

In a context such as this transfiguration of *The Beggar's Opera*



Annie Warren (left), Gordon Brown (center), John Propter (right) and Gordon Brown (far right) in the AO's *Beggar's Opera*. Photo: Bruce Galt.

it would be too easy to caricature Richard Borgey and the entire enterprise. I shall try to avoid this. In my experience modernisation in an expensive production of a minor piece of music theatre of an earlier age can work, and thus be justified.

In denning Mr Borgey's attempt to enter this league, one must be sure what one is attacking. Commercial success, first. Sydney got the 'Rich Man's Talkies' because Borgey and Decca had a recording contract for it, scheduled for March, 1981. Not one of the Australian

transformed his highwayman, Macbeth into a precursor of the white-collar criminal.

There is no need to describe the Hollywood wrap-around given to the story any more than to catalogue the added scenes in the inflated score. If treating the piece as a film scenario had been properly thought through, it may have worked. As it was, we were left with tokenism, wasteful lavishness, and a mismanagement in the ending which says it all.

There is black cynicism in the orchestrated double ending of John Gay's *Aggaine Opera*, when Macbeth escapes the gallows. Brecht introduced it in *The Threepenny Opera*, and Dario Fo shows how it can still make a telling political point in *The Accidental Death of an Unofficial Vice-Admiral-by-Night*. Stoddart opens one reality it seems, with Hollywood demand for a happy ending. Political cynicism, presented as dark comedy, has delivered into commercial pragmatism.

— G. A. S.



Glenn Anderson (Miss) and Andrew Aaron (Monsieur) in the AGO's *La Bohème*. Photo: Bruce Givens

cast was invited to grace that occasion, and our eyes and ears have told us that we did not witness, by coincidence, a pathetic production which turned out to be worthy in its own right.

With the honourable exception of Rye Sevens, trained on the commercial stage, the Australian Opera's principals and chorus members were upstaged in this production. They do not act any better than the fair-weather-quality amateur performers whom I see constantly in Canberra. And those with heavy noses, such as Heather Begg (Mrs Pechum) cannot articulate the text clearly through fatness of operatic tone. The lavish wrong-headedness of the concept implied on the redoubtable John Pringle, whose main nobility of bearing in these surroundings,

loggerheads. Macbeth has already written the music for a new opera, and informs Pouch that higher authority requests his libretto to be completed in four days — not a difficult task, Macbeth suggests, since the words don't matter anyway. He himself writes noisy musical passages to please the public, who are also diverted in opera by 'spectacle'. Therefore, since the words will by either inaudible or ignored, they can be nonsensical any old words will do, provided they rhyme. Incidentally, Macbeth also demands 90% of the lot.

The musicians also have to sing like two women singers, protégées of their respective patrons. The Count's ornate Maria Elvira has had recent success in Spain — she performed one here more than six times in an evening, a genius of improvising, and only likes large parts. As Elvira's, Glenn Amey has ample opportunity to display her splendid voice, rich and often as ever. Even when she is playing and parodying melodramatic vocal styles, it is clear she is absolutely at home with immense trills and ornaments, and taking high-register melisma.

I wrote elsewhere of Patsy McCormay's commensurate acting ability as Charabane in *Figaro* (1979 Perth Festival), and here, in a chic and wag, as the Prince's favourite Tonina, she revels in the stereotypes acquired for her audition: her pseudo-French is appropriately schoolgirlish, and her expressive eyes are set the least enchanting asset of the decorated part in general. About twenty-four (though I detected some shrillness of tone in her 'stammering' aria, but then I suspect that the whole cast mistakenly felt the less than picked house to be unrepresentative, and tended to exaggerate stage 'bounciness' (such as the thumb-sucking and falsetto passages when Elvira makes the men pretend to be children), and to 'over-sing', so as to live on up.

John Wood and Ian Connor are thoroughly professional and musical singers, as was shown by the precise intonation and ensemble in their opening duet. Yet perhaps feeling it necessary to pinger up the action, they covered the light cleaving and suspiciously giggling, and I felt this was reflected in a tendency to overact with the voice as well.

But all was redeemed, despite one or two moments of vocal imbalance, by outstanding singing in the closing quartet, which also struck me as by far Salieri's best piece of writing in the work. Macbeth and Pouch will collaborate on the libretto, while the ladies will refrain from upstaging each other. Full marks also to Mike Cole as their (unintentionally) dour, and long-suffering accompanist, whose horsehair playing deftly alternates, and double (in soiree) with John Hind's.

Prima la musica

by Andrew Hurreick

Prima la musica, poi le parole (Music First, Words Afterwards) is one of 41 operas by Antonio Salini (1759-1825), a prolific composer, famous in his day, and reputed to have possessed Mozart out of jealousy. The work had its premiere on 7 February 1796, and has been revived exactly 175 years later, in a special production by Adrian Slack, for the Festival of Perth as the first part of a double-bill (part two is the Shaffer play *Amadeus*).

'By their works shall ye know them', quotes musical director John Hind's informative programme note, if so, on the evidence of this 'theatrical diversion', Salini must have been gracious and elegant, but a shade superficial — I doubt whether musically he could hold a candle to Michael Haydn (or alone Jassi, or 'Immortal Mozart'), and I did wonder whether this highly committed performance made the piece seem better than it really is.

Despite the music's undoubted charm, and although the work contains only one act I confess to having found it tiring in spots, especially some recitatives — I'm not sure whether default lies in the music, or in the libretto by Giambattista Costa, which relies on the sketchiest of plots to provide opportunities for making fun of eighteenth century musical styles, and sending up extracts from numerous operas (quote by Mozart).

A composer and his librettist are at

DANCE



BY MICHAEL
ANDERSON

Festival of dance

One of the most encouraging aspects of the recent Festival of Dance held in the Seymour Centre as part of the Sydney Festival was the capacity attendance of enthusiastic and critical audiences. On some nights there was room to spare, on others there were up to 50 or more people turned away at the door.

I expect that advertising had something to do with this, saying that publicity for the venture was under the blanket control of the Sydney Festival Committee, but, more to the point, it is becoming increasingly apparent that more and more people are taking an interest in the smaller offerings of the dance scene.

We have at the moment, only one group that could be called "post modern" and that is the Dance Exchange run by Nanette Hassall and Russell Dumas. Both of them have a history of classical and modern technique but both want to forge ahead into areas of construction and form that they see as new.

They don't use movement as an end in itself, but rather as its own subject matter, the distinction being that one limits forms and technique, while the other delimits situations and processes unique to dance and its language. The Dance Exchange doesn't capitalise on technique: they have it to varying degrees but the focus is on small gesture, gesture propelled and movement defined. The pull of anatomy, the stretch of a leg, repeated gestures and so on. You might think that anyone could perform it and perhaps they can.

Take for example a piece presented by the Dance Exchange at the Festival, going by the deliberately bland name of *New Work*. It delivers those people going through simple, basic steps like walking, standing still and opening out the arms while in the background there closed

circuit TV cameras present aspects of those same gestures, crossing in fact a metaphorical image lapse or action. What we are meant to grasp is the development of structure in a figure. The concept, that is the process to that end, fades away into underexposure.

The trouble with the Dance Exchange works, especially for the new audience that they say they want to develop is that they are seldom moving. One can appreciate a well structured dance piece, and admire the cerebral content in it, but unless it illustrates something new in a sufficiently fresh manner it cannot and does not linger in the memory. Perhaps the Dance Exchange doesn't want to be a pioneer as new forms maybe they're not interested in moving an audience or making them remember what they're seeing. It could be that the day of disposable dance has arrived.

Under the skin starts off in a very ordinary living room, with a very ordinary couple going through the motions, speaking bits of dialogue, telling each other about the breakdown of their relationship and then finally (and not very convincingly) turning off into a windowless room viewed by a motley bunch of youths, dream images and general crazies.

The words too thicken sporadically into the fabric of the two people jostling and disorienting with small conceivable dance, lyric, heaving voices and mandering groups. It is a frame-like discourse into fantasy and parade of abjection and alienation, shot through with that dispassionate sense of amoral wisdom that we get in Tupper's *Midsummer Marriage*.

As it turns out the words, and the situations that we come across are more alienating to ourselves than the whole or individual aspect of the dance is while. But then, this is something of what Human Venn is after. The movement is not an end in itself, it is a product included (usually so) to deepen the perception of the entire work and theme.

Under the Skin was one of the highlights of the Festival. With a bit of ruthless editing and some rethinking of sequence at the end of the first half it will be a potent acceptance for some of the ideas going in to make up that cumulative masterpiece.

Kai Tai Chan's One Dance Company is an eclectic group, bringing in dancers, musicians, designers and so on, wherever they feel the urge and necessary to present something for public viewing. The company's raison d'être is to amalgamate as many strands as possible to create a different form of theatre. It goes for

satirical, humour, romance, social comment and so forth. Sometimes it works, it impresses, because it has found just the right mix and the right subject to treat to the sort of theatrical stand out or set as odds with the piece as a whole. At other times, when the collaborations are wrongly blended, the piece emerges as a jigsaw puzzle wherein none of the pieces fit and the whole doesn't make any sense.

A clear point would have to be the company's contribution to the Dance Festival. It was indeed lucky to have such performers as Patrick Harding-Imer and Anne Franzenhauer from the London Contemporary Dance Theatre or a choreographer like Ginoza Watson (who with his ballet *Though No Thought* created one of the most concise, inventive and moving works ever seen here).

When Harding-Imer and Franzenhauer took to the stage in Robert Cohan's *Forest* or Jane Dudley's *Macanessa Breakdown*, we could travel in wonderfully well constructed ballets being given good performances, but what will happen when the One Dance next perform? Will any of this be built upon? I doubt it and it would seem that the Company is playing only an entrepreneurial role these days.

Don Askin's company, Human Venn, also wants to expand boundaries of theatre. It now has a group of dancers who might stick together for longer than a couple of months and so will be able to extend their ideas and imaginations into "new" fields.

The first work they created as a body was Askin's *The Year of the Monkey*, a full length elaboration on material and ideas that came to light in his country in *Monkeys in a Cage* for the Australian Ballet and *Exorcism's Touch* for the Sydney Dance Company. In *Year Askin* on had half spoken words, situations and clues in addition to his wending, twisting and stamping dance vocabulary to identify half-expressed personal moods, emotions and situations.

In his latest work *Under the Skin*, also a part of the Festival, he has ventured into fully formed words and even whole passages of soliloquy and dialogue as well as the presence of live musicians all being a part of the performance.

I get the feeling that all of Askin's works in the past and now the present, full length piece are all accumulations towards a great masterpiece of the future, somewhat in the manner of Kai Taker's monthly passion play *Light*. This is due to the digged determination with which he pursues his themes (mentioned above) and turns them into veritable obsessions.



Monica Vitti: 'Under the Skin' Photo: Chris Daniels

FROM PAGE 17

actor who's been drunk and I haven't been able to shoot him in the close-up I'd planned, and for me it almost destroys the whole fabric of the movie.

The state of the industry...

Although I think the Writers' Guild is right to push Australian screen writers I'm in favour of absolute freedom to bring in anyone you want. If a thousand directors from England wanted to come and work here, I'd say "good on 'em", because it's a competitive business and ultimately the only ones who'll get work are those that are good and make audiences happy.

I'm not worried about the new tax concessions — although there will be a lot of bad films, there will be a lot of good ones too because people will be trained, they'll be given opportunities which will always throw up a lot of talent. As it is this new boom will probably only last a couple of years and then the level of production will drop to something more realistic.

In England now, where they're not doing anything, there are hardly any good directors. If we get closed shop unions like they have and an industry where young people and new ideas can't get in, then it'll atrophy. In America, the top people of say Paramount get all the film school films from all round the States and look at them and if they see one they like they get hold of the director and give him a feature to do — that's how the guy who did *Elephant Man* got it — he was a student.

The future...

Brother Monks brought me an awful lot of offers — mostly scripts which I haven't had time to read because I've been doing *Robert Mores*. I'm doing a film in September called *Forever for Stagedoom*, it's based on an appalling novel which means a lot of work on the script, but it's a good idea. It's a kidnap story, and I think we'll shoot it in Queensland. After that I don't know, though there are a lot of things I'm interested in doing. There are at least three movies I'm very keen to do, but whether I can get them done I don't know — and that's quite apart from any scripts that might arrive. Basically I just enjoy making films, of all kinds, it's like a tremendous hobby, and sometimes I still can't believe I got paid to do it.

ADT at the Festival of Perth

by Terry Owen

The Australian Dance Theatre's performance at this year's Festival of Perth confirmed the company's reputation as the best group of dancers in Australia, and showed off some of the repertoire that has helped create that reputation.

The man largely responsible for this excellence in dance is Jonathan Taylor, ADT's artistic director. He is a talented choreographer and hardworking man of the theatre who has done a lot of good things for dance in Australia since he arrived in Adelaide from London early in 1977 to reassemble the old ADT.

Taylor brought, from his old company, Ballet Rambert, two fine dancers in Julia Blake and Joseph Scoglio who, as Ballet Modern and Associate Artistic Director respectively, have been invaluable in providing the daily backup Taylor has needed to build the company to its present strength.

For four years Taylor has been working at the difficult task of building in Australia a modern dance repertoire that is artistically and commercially successful and, in addition, one that nurtures his 16-dancer company as a whole. Through his close association with the Rambert company he has been able to build into ADT's new repertoire world-class ballets by Christopher Bruce and Norman Macon. As well as continuing to work with the Rambert stable, Taylor has used Australian choreographers like Jaqui Carroll, and given dancers like Scoglio the opportunity to continue to develop as choreographers.

Previously, Taylor's full length spectacles which has drawn enthusiastic audiences everywhere it's been performed, including last year's Edinburgh Festival, was the company's first choice for the Perth Festival. However, it takes four days to set up, and with a season of only six nights, Taylor decided to offer instead a spread of eight works over two programmes.

Injuries caused last-minute changes to the shaping of both programmes, and so on opening night at His Majesty's Theatre we saw an odd mix of two comic works by Taylor, *The Godly Sport* and *Fishermonger*, and two powerful Christopher Bruce pieces, *Shed Angels* and *Labyrinth*.

Labyrinth, Bruce's most recent work on

the company, looked stylish and important in the generous dimensions of His Majesty's stage. It's a powerful evocation of the Celtic, miniature legend, structured around a vaporous electronic score by Martin Schenck, and lit by the masterly Bill Adams. Like *Shed Angels* it's full of strong writing for the men, and the male dancers, particularly John Nobbs and Dan Secomb, showed the technical polish and intelligent grasp of constant that characterise the company as a whole.

Joe Scoglio's *Winter in Spring*, a recent work using Malher's *Song of the Earth*, opened the second programme. Beautifully in warm earth colours dominated the design and reinforced the impact of Scoglio's big, unsharpened dance phrases. His ability to create and maintain the dynamics of ensemble writing to evoke Malher's music and the poem is a skill rare in contemporary choreographers. He also seems to have the gift of pushing his dancers through to new areas of technical achievement.

Another recent work, Taylor's marvelous neo-classical piece set to

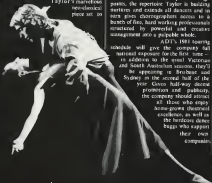
Schubert's *Transfigured Night*, closed the second programme. I had seen it first at the beginning of its life early last year at the Adelaide Festival, when the dancers were still tentative and the shape of the dance writing was dominated by the power and beauty of the score.

In the Perth performances, the music well remained as power, but the dancers were fully in charge of Taylor's writing, mostly in a long and quicksilver-paced pas de deux at the heart of the work, filled wittily with complex lifts and enchainments.

Now van den Bergh, who went to the ADT from the W.A. Ballet Company early in 1980, and Margaret Wilson, were stunningly good in a bewitching piece of romantic dancing that, for classical, outshone anything I've seen from Australian dancers in years.

The best of Taylor's dancers have got the speed, stamina and flash of successful athletes, and the powerful technical abilities that come from a strong classical training allied with a tough schooling in the Martha Graham technique. At its high points, the repertoire Taylor is building nurtures and extends all dancers and in turn gives choreographers access to a bunch of fine, hard working professionals structured by powerful and creative management into a palpable whole.

ADT's 1981 touring schedule will give the company full national exposure for the first time — in addition to the usual Victorian and South Australian seasons, they'll be appearing in Brisbane and Sydney in the second half of the year. Given half-way decent promotion and publicity, the company should attract all those who enjoy home-grown theatrical excellence, as well as the hardcore dance buffs who support their own companies.



Ronald van den Bergh and Margaret Wilson in ADT's *Transfigured Night*

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See Local Press for Booking Details.

THEATRE/ACT

Cold, not chilling

COUNT DRACULA

by Margarette Webb

Count Dracula by Ted Toller Cushman. Repertory Theatre of St Louis. 5-18 February to 18 March 1991. Director: Pamela Woodring. Stage Manager: Pat Davis. Set Designer: Russell Brown. (Photo: Amy)

John Waters as Dracula made my stomach turn to warm pink sludge, trickle down my legs and out my toes. Quite an unusual theatrical effect and very hard to duplicate or rival. At Theatre Three the best that drive-bombed me had an almost equally great, though qualitatively different effect; whence it came and whether were who knows but the Director of Special Effects? It was certainly a triumph of bathos, though lacking the scent of sulphur or bromine. Definitely not a hot act of hell. The green flames that suffused the fireplace whenever Dracula was about to appear, the fog that heralded his coming, the feathery shadow on the curtain were all good of their kind, but a little half-hearted and hopelessly jural. The howling of the wolves approached electrifying, but the overall good number of the production carried a. Of course it's a comedy, but any comedy bereft of dramatic relief — a few genuine shivers down the spine go a long way. Even Reinhold's explanation that he was without shoes because bare feet gave him a prehensile grip — a staircase loaded with shuddering foreboding — was passed over lightly.

Here is a play that cries out for the heavy hand, for spectral tones of voice, cackles of fiendish laughter and thrilling shivers of music. Instead it was a dawning comic comedy, all good, clean, Neil Coward stuff with urbane English gentlemen politely contending with chaps who really weren't quite the thing, what? So much potential comedy lost when the villain chappies were really only a little warped and foreign when they could have been hilariously, melodramatically terrifying.

Gary Richardson was a nice Dracula, subtle Germanic accent excellently sustained, good presence and appearance, very, very urbane — a perfect Transylvanian gentleman of the old school. Theatresnugly well fed, for a vampire. But not chilling. Just cold. The first two acts, dominated by

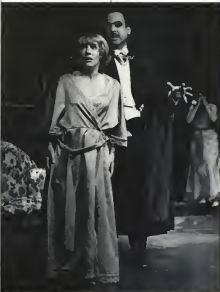
urbane gentlemen, lacked spice, but as vampiredom took over the Hemsens of the piece, (Jonny Dingley, as Mina), the excitement began to mount. Her swoches from vampire lady, end in tang and claw, to sappy, goody-goody English rose were carefully drawn, and were slightly reminiscent of the John Waters *Dracula*, which left you barracking wholeheartedly for the vampires.

In a way the whole play is potentially a splendid exercise in developing sympathies across cultures: the vampires are so much more real and human than the stuffy, out-out defenders of the right. Tony Horvitz as

Renfield, the (literally) bloodthirsty henchman of Dracula, was the other poor of excitement in the production, but he too, though probably the most sympathetic character of all, was pleasantly eccentric, not chilling.

Josh Williams as the honny, dotty English gentleman was also entertainingly eccentric, but less endearing, so than the dangerously mad Reinhold.

Altogether, a not right act, though, even among the somewhat limited theatrical offerings of Canberra, by no means a must.



Jonny Dingley (Mina) and Gary Richardson (Dracula) in Canberra Rep's *Count Dracula*

THEATRE/NSW

Crackling with energy

ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST

by Anthony Buckley

Accidental Death of an Anarchist by Dario Fo
Directed by Tony Mottet, National Theatre,
Sydney

Opened 11 February 1991

Director: Brian MacGregor, Designer: Stephen Curry,
Lighting Designer: Jonathan Calver, Stage Manager:
Ian-Henry Goodridge

Cast: Paul George Whaley, Inspector Belmonte: Tony
Taylor, Inspector Piovani: Paul Mason, Super-
intendent: Martin Harris, Constables: Robert Little-
wood, Maria Polito: Deborah Kennedy
(Professional)

Accidental Death of an Anarchist engages Sydney theatre audiences with their second exposure within eight months to the fascinating theatre style of Italy's Dario Fo. Last July the New Theatre gave us a reasonably good production of Fo's *We Can't Pay for What We Don't Pay*, and that production at least got people talking about the most interesting writer of political farce.

National Dramascore is not exactly the kind of stand-up performance area that Fo might have in mind — his audiences are more specifically students, workers and housewives, and the space can be pretty much whatever you will, where you will. Generally this was an excellent production in terms of pace and rhythm, with marvellous acting from George Whaley and Martin Harris, and a perfectly groffy grin and creak on from Stephen Curry.

There is much we can take from Fo and some things we simply cannot. As the programme notes rightly point out this is a *very typical Italian view of power as corrupt and chaotic*. Fo is not a political theorist of any complexity. In fact, he is not clear and, according to our perceptions, so do our sympathies. Power and authority and the many abuses of the individual in the stuff of Fo's theatre. The good and the bad fall into distinct categories, the bad is granted a little Groucho a wildly "humorous" freedom (but has little to do with grim reality) and the authorities, here the police-squad police, are reduced to fools. But that is the very nature of farce and in *Accidental Death* we have as many ideas flying at us as comic routines.

Beyond this point though I think the various Australian Italian parallels rather



George Whaley, Robert Littlewood, Tony Taylor and Martin Harris in National's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Photo: Dennis del Fresno

overlooked, to say the least. Universal brotherhood between Sydney and Milan is just not on. The one can think of several Pinelli type incidents with our cops over the last decade but this production's well-intended subtexts (oh, say, the Kerr-Whelan debacle) struck me as assured.

There was little to fault in the production. The first act was a little lukewarm in parts, if anything there was a tendency to overstrain the comic routines to the point of tedium, occasionally the actors were not easy, such material might ideally appear effortless. Tony Taylor Belmonte was wonderfully hysterical to Paul Gekman's Constables, both bloody thick as the provincial brick. Paul Mason was the most, it is no one else who

second not actually suited to this style of theatre — but Mason has no other occasions given in evidence of his qualities as an actor, and he warmed to the part in the various second act, Deborah Kennedy as the persecuted Maria Polito was right at home with a buoyant air of humour and righteousness that she maintained down to her absurdly ordered god and poster.

But really it was Harris and Whaley who gave the production the style it needed.

Martin Harris' Superintendent was an inspired piece of acting. Indeed if parallel worked it was his jaw-protruding, slow drinking but (no paradox here) smiling Goker cop that the point was made: no need for side-wipes when we had this. The sight and sound of Harris in full flight (with Whaley conducting) among the anarchist's "The whole world is my home" will remain for me one of the most memorable features of this production. In common with Whaley, Harris sustained the comic illusion throughout.

Which brings us to George Whaley's Fo. This was masterfully sustained, witty, alive to every nuance both on and off stage, ever precise in timing of delivery and movement. It is a pity the last moments of Whaley onstage. One remembers the similar authority he brought to Sir Archibald Jangser in Scoggin's *Jangser* at Malthus in December 1978.

Brian MacGregor deserves the final applause for his sense of pace that kept from the odd moment in the first act kept the whole thing crackling with the energy good farce requires. It may not have been done in the volatile context of the street but it was enough to tell us that Dario Fo is worth getting one's teeth into.

Makes you think about existence

HAMMER

by Barry O'Connor

Hammer by Justin Fleming, Ensemble Theatre, Malabar Point NSW. Opened February 1981.
Director: Doug Anderson, Lighting: Peter Cuddihy, Stage Manager: John Blackmore, Cost. Prost.: Peter Cuddihy, Guestmusic: Bob Edwards, Writer: George Layzell, Music: Helen Miranda, Writers: Terry Molloy, Vanessa Joyce, Bruce Smith, Simon, Greg Saunders, Director: Don Edwards.
(Continued)

Hammer transferred from Phillip Street to the Ensemble after a successful debut at this year's Festival of Sydney Playwrights. And it's not hard to see why Justin



Peter Cuddihy (Frank) in the Ensemble's *Hammer*. Photo: Nigel Ribi

Fleming's first produced play should be given wider notice. *Hammer* is a very provocative work, so disturbing in fact that it forces us to view the story of a quadruple murder as an allegory of man's trying to free himself from the nets of social convention. It's an uncomfortable prospect, for the audience, and deliberately so (intended I suspect). Now this may all seem to be the product of a jaded lawyer who's gone metaphysical about the law — at times the writing is pretentious and the message miserably hammered home — but this is a play which makes you think about why you're here, about existence, and the quality of life. Little wonder *Hammer* resonates with intimations of *Homer* and *True Romance*.

It's very hard to summarise the plot

without making a stern barrel. "A grandson finds his grandmother from her casket by making her with a golden happiness, which is somehow related to the boy's father whose presence is felt in a ghostly, agonized 'voice over', urging the son to remember the place crash in which he was born" tells you what I mean. The play is best described as a series of paranoiac scenes, of symbolic clashes. *Hammer* is a dramatic poem which sometimes works well, sometimes it fails.

Sound, lighting and scenery combine to heighten the play poetically. It seems only fitting that the director, Doug Anderson, was also the designer. The echoing scenes of Simon's victims at the start of the play set the supernatural tone of *Hammer*, which is suggested only by the scenes of glodding naturalism in the latter half of Act 1. However, the sound of the crashing aeroplane is a haunting refrain which reminds us of the impact of the plot.

Brian Nevill was excellent as the schoolteacher Vanessa. Greg Saunders showed promise and sometimes mastery as Simon, the elusive main role. Excellent support came from the rest of the cast, particularly from Helen McCulloch as the girlfriend (and almost fifth victim) Natalie. Peter Cuddihy's portrait of plausible villainy as Frank Miles was most memorable.

Hammer is enough to want to see more from Justin Fleming.

Transformation to theatre of war

PRIVATES ON PARADE

by Barry O'Connor

Privates On Parade by Peter Nichols. Q Theatre, Malabar NSW. Opened February 1981.
Director: Arthur Dicks, Designer: Lesley Sharp, Musical Director: Philip Scott.
Cost. Makeup: Terry Brady, Beauty: Alan Bell, Ltd. Michael Condon, Doctor: Robert Davis, Coroner: Alan Fletcher, Sylvia: Lesley Gabriel, Drummer: Alan Fletcher, Flute: Anthony Ingram, Pains: Philip Scott, Flowers: Stephen Thomas, Bring-Loor: Jack Youngs, Chang: Tony Esme.
(Continued)

Privates On Parade, the Royal Shakespeare Company's success of some five years back, is having its Sydney premiere at the Q Theatre's Premier's space, which has been magically transformed into a theatre of war. Camouflage now encase the audience, containing actors and audience within the one experience. There is a

thrust stage with seating on three sides, and a curtain on which are painted wonderfully hokey palm trees and chunky bamboo letters, which spell out S A D I S F A. That stands for "Song and Dance Unit, South East Asia".

The place is Malaya and the time 1948, the first of twelve years of what euphemistically became known as "A State of Emergency", but which in reality was the first of the Viet Nam style wars. I expected the Peter Nichols of *Joe Egg* and *The Kneezers* to have made more of this theme, but he doesn't. Instead we have the Nichols of *Forget-Me-Not Lane*, with a touch of *The National Health*.

In two acts and eleven song and dance numbers, Nichols chronicles the lives and loves of this run ENSA unit. The homosexuals and their parasites, a belligerent sergeant major who is running guns to the other side, a chemist's assistant girl, and a commanding officer who leads his unlikely company to disaster, with a walking cane in one hand and *Buryan* in the other. The strongest of them all is Acting Capt. Terry Dennis, a rising queen who is both sympathetic and screaming, and Robert Davis makes him awfully right for the role, in which he succeeds most when he tries to be Capt. Dennis's a demanding part in a company play which boasts the Q's usual ensemble strengths. Of Mr Davis' camp impersonations — Vera Lynn, Carmen Miranda, Marlene Dietrich, and Noel Coward — it was his Noel I liked most.



Robert Davis as Terry Dennis in the Q Theatre's *Privates On Parade*. Photo: Trevor Campbell

Director Arthur Dicks has met the challenge of the complex music on some. However, the second half of the show was lighter than the first, but I suspect this imbalance will have been redressed during the run. This is the kind of show which demands deflagrating energy, and that can come only from continuous playing before audiences. And that this production assuredly deserves.

Simply the actor

SOLO

by Collette Rayment

Like a programme of solo performances, women dressed and used by the third year students of The Drama Studio (formerly Rensell Agency Class) between 1969 and 1970, Sydney, opened February 4 1981.
Directors: Lisa Kishine, Assistant: Anthony Knight, Stage Manager: Ian McIlwain (London).

In the Drama Studio's presentation of some twenty-seven self-contained solos — they cannot be so kind monologues since the audience is clearly needed, by conjuring in fact, to imagine the presence and total interpenetration of the "other characters" in each solo — it was quite evident that some advantages worked from songs that would be quite functional as episodes of a TV series, while others created scripts that, due to their specialness or passion were quite literary and well able to stand alone.

David Hall's creation, *De Kaitihs*, promised to be such a script particularly in the genre gynaeconologist told his pregnant wife to expect better up by going and buying a new dress, but it fell away as the piece became too heavily concerned with theories of children as useful acts of society and so on. Colin Mitchell created two amazing figures — a nervous, self-willed Pekingese adolescent, haunted by a woman waiting in Purgatory recording, and a whimsical psychiatrist who delights in his female patient's boasts of older ego as he urges her in her hypnoactive trance to "reconstruct" him.

Joseph Lee's named characters of Rosalie, a naive country lass, Marcella, a prophet of doom and master whore, and Mrs Eddy, an ethical Christian Scientist were both intelligently conceived and well acted. The tour de force of the evening was Michael Mcagher's presentation of a Randwick race caller commentator aping named Ken Parrell. As a piece of Australian it was liberating, amusing and, so those who have been known to frequent the last, daring.

In their study of characterisation the majority of students sought to depict individuals from the adolescent world of police and parental oppression, drugs, dating, sex (heterosexual and homosexual), rape, unemployment, with some excursions into prisons, doctors' rooms and hospitals — all of which were often very good. Some of the more original, poignant and delightful a better class. Some students, however, showed signs of a broader life experience and/or imagination as their convincing presentations of senility and old age,

religion and racial fanaticism, eccentricity and lunacy. Range of characterisation ability was more evident with some actors, such as Glenda McPhee, Anne-Marie Gale and Michael Mcagher, than with others who tended to present the same personality in the guise of this or that profession or occupation.

Generally, however, the students' self-proclaimed aim — to study the basis of characterisation and the effect of relationships on a character — were

realised. A movement of the finger, a tilt of the body, a steady silence and still body would successfully indicate to the audience what kind of reaction the character portrayed was "receiving" from the imagined person whom he or she is loving, hating, deceiving, persecuting, etc. In their direction of the students, Tim Roberts and Anthony Knight employed three valuations on the full — a mandatory substitute when the there is no congruence of skills but simply the actor himself — solo.



"Woman" by Anne-Marie Gale

THEATRE / QLD

Style and precision

ANNIE.
HOMER.

by Jeremy Ridgman/Stale Kop

Directed by Thomas Manton. Charles Crompton and Marion Chapman. Queensland Theatre Company. Brisbane Qld. Opened February 1981.

Director: Alan Edwards. Design: James Mahomed and Graham McLean. Stage Manager: Elton Kennedy. Sound: Peter Freeman.

Cast: Anna Dennis, Anne as Yolande Harbottle, Neil Hamilton, Ben Mann, Oliver Whitlock, David Williamson, Gloria Harbottle, Susan Williams, John Ridge, Harold Brown, Ray Haydon, Bettina Lewis, Matt Freeman, John Warden, Sharon Walker, Peter Noble, Lynn Treadwell, Sally Robinson, Margery Smith, Robert Carter, Joyce Hall, Eleanor West, Kate Barker, Stephen Hadden, Frank Lloyd, David John Hugh Murray, Anthony McGill, Lynn Macfarlane, Jack Wright.

Qld. Theatre Co.

After by David Barry. Brisbane Arts Centre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened February 1981.
Director: John Milson. Design: John Milson, Production Manager: Margaret Sells.
Cast: Barry Allen, Edith, Jack, Greg Cook, Mar-

jorie Kaye, Suzanne, Kathleen, Betty Ross, Alfred Brown Hamilton.
(Production)

It has oft-times been the task of the musical to convince us that however little gold we may have in the bank, every cloud had a silver lining. *Annie* in this respect, if not in terms of inventiveness, is the American musical par excellence. Depression needn't be depressing, it happens home, and with such poignant precision that one needs occasionally to pinch oneself to remember some of the caring moments that characterised Hollywood musicals usually written during that first depression, such as the exquisitely satirical *Gold-diggers of 1933*.

Someone's tongue may have edged into his cheek with the idea of a Roosevelt in the White House with a child, but that's not the founding idea, we learn, inspires the New Deal with a song and a winning smile, but otherwise *Annie* is an liberated spectacle. Give a winsome orphan a rich foster father and a household of soft-hearted domestics, save her from poverty, miseries and romance her with her pocket and the economic decline of the West fades into insignificance.

The music is bright and catchy without being inaccessible. Innovative or witty it

certainly is not. Well, Bart or Southern might never have existed. However, with Jack Weir's utterly inventive choreography, it provides the QTC cast with more than a few opportunities for a smart routine. Ben Shubin and Duncan Watt are superb in the lavishly wicked Harlequin and excel in their "Easy Street" number. David Clendenning makes an imposing Warbucks and moves easily from reedow baritone solo to song and dance duet. Terence Harbottle (one of two alternating Annas) is a real find, an enormous talent with perhaps an occasionally over-emphasis upon. Despite the lack of the revolve, the production moves along smartly, frequently shimmering with sophistication and style.

The Brisbane Actors' Company have surfaced again with David Storey's *Mouse* and, on this showing, one wishes they would both up more often. In the confines of the new Forward Street Theatre, they have explored its rare and subtle chamber piece with astounding clarity. Emotions, nuances and levels of communication flutter desperately as four seek, share of hope, bear their imperceptibly healing wounds. Spare, elliptical, wry, the play is unique in the Storey canon and John Milson's production, tuned to precision, explores its poetry with assurance.

Alan Eadicott and Greg Gough's performances balance beautifully, the one stomach flared occasionally blustering the other gentle, watery, his genuine anxiety unfolding from time to time in an expertly understated gesture. The understated tone of the two women counterpoint the men's self absorption and again for balance is perfect. Kaye Stevenson, as the embittered, caustic Kathleen, has never been better, a clever foil to Betty Ross's bubbling Marygro. Only Steven Harsden aims towards over-exploitation in the difficult role of the obsessive strongman, Alfred, the only recognisably "insane" character on stage. Otherwise this is a rare and memorable production, a perfect vehicle for the company, as last defining as area they might profitably quarry in future.

Clear, crisp but monotone

HAMLET

THE RUNAWAY MAN

by Veronica Kelly

Written by William Shakespeare. TM Company. Brisbane QTC. Opened February 18, 1984. Director: Bryan Nelson. Design: Bryan Nelson, Paul Hensley, John Dutton. Cost: Christine Lee, Weidner, Gertrude: Jennifer Woodbridge, Hamlet: Geoff Cartwright, Polonius: Laurence Hodge, Ophelia: Judith Anderson. Lyrics:

Patrick Reed, Heir to: Robert Arthur, with Michael McElferry, Malcolm Cook, Johnny Rush, Ross Daniels, James Poyles, Paul Sagar, Paul Hunter, Lloyd King, Tony Smith, Daniel Morgan, Anne-Marie Morris, Andrew Crockett, Sharon Cochrane, Peter Keanne. (Reviewed)

The Runaway Man by Mick Bates. La Brea, Brisbane QTC. Opened February 12, 1984. Director/Designer: David Ben (Reviewed)

In a brightly refurbished Twelfth Night auditorium a dashing 16 white phloxom thrush forward over the usually forbidding chasm between stage and audience. The setting suggests a desire on the part of the TM Company and its new artistic director, Bryan Nelson, to reach out to audiences with their first offering of the year, *Hamlet*. With a cast of sixteen experience, the production endeavours to give a clear reading of the sparsely classic, which is indeed commendably easy to both see and hear.

The text is not back to three hours and displayed in an austere black and white staging concept, with a general absence of non-appreciable effects. However the splashes of colour and interest suggested in the costumes do not carry over into the interpretation, which is so uniform in attack as to be largely monochromatic.

Some scenes are fleshed out with a purposeful reading. Judith Anderson clarifies Ophelia's position during the nursery scene, stressing her innocence of complicity with Polonius's spying. This gives the character a firm and interesting line for her subsequent downward slide to the watery grave. The Polonius of Laurence Hodge is a shifty old intriguer with some dignity about his machinations, although a busy, such, including fool, it is

credible that his death can cause genuine grief.

It is a pity that this generosity of presentation carries over to the play's ambiguous villains, Claudius and Gertrude. Here, the interpretational influences that may colour our their part in the design are sketchily filled in, rendering them rather flat. Claudius seems such a harmless, understated bloke that one can hardly imagine the grave opening in jaws to cast back a committed grief in order to set right any undertaking of his.

The prince's part is taken by Geoff Cartwright, a fine actor who shows that he's got a fine Hamlet when. Always lost in speech and action, Cartwright takes on the daunting role with consistent intelligence and energy. The part does not require any showboating, in fact the overall monochromatic approach lives out the main role to the general uncommitted reading. While the posture is clear and sparkling, it lacks many of the colours and most of the structure which gives depth and purpose. More is demanded of the great Hamlet than is seen here, but the achievement leaves no doubt that more is capable of being given. The production overall is a black and white sketch of the play with the consistent virtues of clarity and progress. The drawback is its one-dimensionality, an unwillingness to launch into a blaring, committed interpretation which really takes off from that platform and serves the nerves and imagination of the audience.

La Brea's offering, *The Runaway Man*, takes place in a very finished set of the front room — should that be living area? — of a smart brick house somewhere in, presumably, the western suburbs. The



Malcolm Cook, Clendenning, Geoff Cartwright (Hamlet) and Robert Arthur (Mouse) in TM's Hamlet. Photo: Chris Ellis

programme however informs us that the play itself is not finished, this being the third review with others anticipated. My contribution to the fourth version is a suggestion to cut all self-conscious actor-to-audience addresses, as few things are more truly alienating than to be informed by an actor that he *knows* we're out there.

The play is a portrait of a middle-class,

middle-aged marriage, assessing the significant life crisis to commence at age 35. As a journalist, makes various attempts to kill himself for reasons which neither he nor anyone else can explain.

If you like bright, unworldly whimsy about the physical and metaphysical dimensions of the middle class male, finding such problems as urges to tell look-as-me-

mumy funny stories, to be unfaithful to his wife, and so kill himself, then this is the play for you. It's not for me, unless version four becomes considerably more serious and more detached about its subject, and then able to be considerably funnier about it. Better luck next time. Good cast of young actors, first design and direction.

THEATRE/NT

Found the laughs

ABRUD PERSON SINGULAR

by Paul Cowdy

Abrud Person Singular by Alan Ayckbourn. Darwin Theatre Group at Brown's Mart, NT. Opened 12 February 1981.

Director: Rodney Kleber, Lighting: Tony Scottwick, Stage Manager: Les Brownell, Cost: Jane Kathy Clouston, Music: Terry Kearrick, Ronald, Richard Cromack, Marlene, Jessica Knight, Gaudylin: David Mollerworth, Eva: Ann Warburton. (P/O: 400)

Motivating Darwin's philistine and small population to forgo television, cinema and pub for theatre, requires some commercial forethought. And as Alan Ayckbourn said, there is a "marked preference for comedy when it comes to play going".

So with the return after a year's absence of South Australian Robert Kimber as Artistic Director of the Darwin Theatre Group, an first production of the 1980 season was looking for the laughs — and found them.

The play was Ayckbourn's *Abrud Person Singular*, the "collage" comedy that first played at the Scarborough Theatre with Richard Briers in the lead role of Sidney Hopgrove, the ironic, success story character that eventually has everyone dancing to his tune.

Terry Kearrick seemed to have modelled the role on the Brier's style — with a hint of the Chaplinesque — as Sidney, putting on an agile and appropriately staged performance. Kathy Clouston, as his wife Jane, worked too hard at her part, giving her a little too much substance at times, but she had the audience with her in her solo pieces as a piano-struck, hem-popped little woman. Her high pitched notes of raucosity on his outgassed without shoes as guests arrived, raised the first real guffaws. From that moment on, Jane had the affection of the audience.

Jessie Knight was well cast as Marlene, the well bred, alcoholic wife of the Bank Branch Manager, Ronald, played by



Richard Cromack, Terry Kearrick and Dave Mollerworth in *Abrud Person Singular*.

Richard Cromack. Jessica brewed through her performance effortlessly and was well supported by Cromack who remained abstracted throughout, without appearing unbearably vague. He has been a formidable character on stage before — as the psychiatrist in Orton's black comedy *When the Rubber Smell*, and it would have been a temptation for him to overplay the role. That he resisted that — even after being electrified during the farcical suicide attempts of Eva (Ann Warburton) in Act 2 — is to his credit.

A few hostile faces among the women members of the audience at the beginning of Act 2, showed that Dave Mollerworth, as Eva's husband Gaudylin, had pitched his speech of male self-judification ("do you think I enjoy being some kind of sexual Flying Dutchman?" — at the right level. But he was less convincing as the locher when wiggling ineptly with his male colleagues. Ann Warburton's ironic drift from one suicide attempt to another in her fellow players frustrated her efforts, without conscious knowledge of her intentions, had good timing and pace.

Ayckbourn's script keeps up the action but some of the visible (and) requires the players to be on cue without seeming to hear. However Eva's first appearance on stage came over as nervous rather than

the neuroticism that Ayckbourn intended. It was a body language problem that requires study of neurotic movement.

Ayckbourn draws attention to a sense of collective guilt among audiences who are enjoying themselves and says that the play's final scene in which all dance to the party game mentality of Sidney and Jane, is deliberately serious.

Robert Kimber used lighting effectively to drop the curtain on a "dramatic metaphor", but for some reason the audience laughed too long, showing that the metaphor did not come through clearly enough. Perhaps it was a mistake to have the players link arms and congo through the curtain calls.

The three functions of the play require the right props to convey further meanings: the three inhabiting couples and the sets achieved this without unnecessary fuss or technology, backed by bold strokes of abstract kitchen colour.

It was an evening which set out to be enjoyable rather than demanding and with more serious work scheduled for later in the season and an eye to future audiences, it was a good start. Kimber says he wanted to make people laugh, and he did, well supported by his players. The Group's next production is South Australian writer, Donal Clarke's *Alviner Ruvyflor*. That will prove more demanding.

THEATRE/SA

Realistic in the best sense

A HARD GOD

by Marla Thomsch

A Hard God by Peter Keenan. Saint Thomas Company of SA. Adelaide Festival Centre. Playhouse. Opening 12 February 1984

Director: Nick Knight. Designer: Bob Heywood. Lighting: Nigel Levinge. Stage Manager: Malcolm Cook.

Cast: Don Edson, Edwyn Hodgeman, Joe James, James, Aggie, Monica Maughan, Jack, Philip Quast, Martin, Karen Miles, Paddy, John Saunders, Monica, Barbara, Miss (Performers)

In contrast to the Adelaide Advertiser's critic, who denigrated the production as "gratuitous but unimpaired", I found the revival of this approved and important Australian play a profoundly moving as well as very entertaining, theatrical experience.

A Hard God was written in the early twenties as part of a trilogy of plays by one of our more respected playwrights. The play has been toured nationally, is published as a book by Currency Press and has for a number of years been on the school syllabus in several states, as well as being shown on ABC television. It is Peter Keenan's thirteenth play. The action portrays, not without humourous touches, a very troubled time in the lives of an Australian Irish Catholic family in Sydney in the late 1940s.

We were part of the audience on one of the State Theatre Company's regular "criticism" nights. After the performance the director, Nick Knight, invited the Sydney author on stage to comment on the production and to react to questions about the play.

When questions were not immediately forthcoming, Peter Keenan acted in the Irish monologist he cheerfully called himself by first explaining his reasons for the play's unusual construction. Instead of using a subplot, a more conventional technique, he deliberately split the action into simultaneously staged halves. The plot starts with Joe going off to a Catholic Youth meeting, leaving his father reading the paper, trying to overcome his fatally fading eyesight by tediously placing his chair on top of the table to be nearer the light. From then on the older and younger generations are shown in turn acting out their dilemmas on different sides of the stage. Significantly Joe does not appear



Philip Quast (Jack) and James Laurie (Joe) in STC, SA's *A Hard God*

"in focus" again until the final scene.

The excellently designed and lit stage two-level set gave more prominence to the struggle of the two boys than the original and very limited area at the old Herold Street Theatre in Sydney had permitted in 1973. Then the actor Cassidy's living room drama was central and concentrated on the late Gloria Down, unforgettably real as Aggie. In this new production the backyard where the two boys meet, become friends and finally part, was cleverly set slightly lower than the lounge of the western suburbs family home.

After their initial scene together, when James Laurie and Philip Quast loomed rather large in their outside period overcoat, their sensitive and well directed playing of the homosexual incident in the lives of Joe and Jack made one quite forget that they were not the adolescents the

author had in mind.

The most memorable performance in this production was given by Ted Hodgeman who held the audience's attention and won their total sympathy for the gentle but strong pater familias of the Cassidy tribe of three brothers. Monica Maughan's Aggie was in the first part deliberately underplayed but then splendidly gained in stature until she predominated in the tragic reevaluation of the ending.

Peter Keenan clarified some of the play's meanings for today's Adelaide playgoers, characterising it as being about Catholics. Conceived as two examples of how cruelly hard God is, how difficult to understand, so that no one can fathom his ways and the purpose of suffering. Keenan in this play shows the Church's view of homosexuality and the conditioning of the

Church for the time of disasters such as test loss, incurable marital breakups, and destruction by cancer.

The play is at once very realistic in the best sense of that ambiguous word and truly delirious as well as being for this very reason, universal and certainly not a narrative play. In two time sequences, going backwards and forwards, assure this. And the action is confined to two moments: the other Casualty children are not featured because this would detract from the play's core of suffering and would only serve to raise irrelevant factual questions. One of the brothers' wives is only a theme: voice off-stage. While Martin's religious Monica represents an extreme Catholicism which is all the more false when confronted with Agger's sincere doubts that make her the audience identification character who ultimately triumphs.

Perception and presumption

UPSIDE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

RED LIGHT SQUARE

by Gus Warby

Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World by David Allen. State Theatre Company of S.A. Playhouse Adelaide. Opens February 1981.
Directors: Kevin Palmer, designer: Ben White.
Cast: Lawrence, Tim Robertson, Franks, Marilyn Allen, Jack, Tom Connolly, Victoria, Patricia Downing.
(Professional)

Red Light Square directed by Peter Lamb. State Theatre Co. Theatre St. Adelaide S.A. opens February 1981.
Directors: Margaret Davis, Michael Fuller, Paul and Michael Morley.
Cast: Bill Cole, Sue Lyons.
(Professional)

Australia must be the most discovered place on earth. Even before it was touched by the pink machine men it was "known" and needed by them — a presence conjured from a fear of absence. The mine at the bottom of the map was both a mirror image of the North and a smouldering point. The image repeats itself in many ways in the modern fiction, film and theatre of Australia, from Kurrner's *On The Beach* to Casey's *The Cartographers*. In this context, *Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World* is another scrap of map.

Two writers, in search of the meeting point of firmament and foundation, climb down, jack-a-buck, to test their "other" reality. David Allen rises and fictionalises D. H. Lawrence facing Australia. In an assemblage of self-contained encounters,

flashbacks, fragments and variations, the piece uses Lawrence's way here to speculate on the effect of time, travel and place on the sensibility of the writer, and the strength of his apparent convictions. In this case the matter is sexual and political equality.

The rule is again inasmuch as it suggests that the play relies on information far much of its effect. Allen tumbles Lawrence, Lawrence refuses to be mates with Jack. Jack insists Franks, Franks turns on Lawrence and Lawrence (I suspect) takes Allen with him when he labours "up" to Africa with a promise which sounds like a threat: "If I ever come back here again, I'll say". At the end of it all, however, we are left with Jack, the Australian, and his wife, exposed but still uncaptured. *Upside Down*, then, is a precarious combination of perception and presumption. When it works, it has an element of daring. When it doesn't, it patronises. This is perhaps enough of the tension, an "early" play, and... should be!

There is a "popular" quality about the writing and the playing style — a little of what you hear (with work) which makes the whole event accessible. The documentary fragments, the blatant fictions

the comic speculation and realism, the domestic observation, beside attend the figure of Lawrence, making him both signpost and curiosity. Clearly there is also in the liberties taken with a character who takes himself seriously, the Poet in the Panacea trapped in the trappings of his own creation. The talehouse battles between foreigners on foreign soil is also entertaining. The audience recognised in Franks (Lawrence's "ultimate reality") someone "at" the place, not from. They clearly followed her lead.

The production was not so successful, however, in taking the other tack: the one which leads to a tight, powerful Lawrence, or to a Franks tortured by the cry of absent children. Both of these qualities are there in some measure in Allen's sparse writing. Instead, Tim Robertson chose a harassed, slightly stumped, counter-punching vulnerability for Lawrence, which soon became too photographed detail. Marilyn Allen's frontal attack thus became an inevitable force in the production. This basic, but not without sexuality and aristocratic mean powered Kevin Palmer's vigorous and generally well-planned production. But the play is a four-hander, and the representative Australians, Jack and Victoria, seemed more subordinate than needs be this time around. Jack and his politics, for example, were treated like the troublesome blowfly which hit upon Lawrence in the opening moments of the production — a minor blemish.

It is to the credit of Tom Connolly and Victoria Downing that they establish their credentials without fuss. Mr Downing is a fine ensemble actor of dabbles, class and "player d'homme" in the first half of the evening, and Connolly in his second-half busy dabbles on "action".

The city needs late night theatrical entertainment and there has been an enthusiasm, if small, audience for *Red Light Square*, which featured B.J. Cole, Sue Lyons and pianist, Michael Morley, in a singing, talking, dancing piece which they derived with John Lane (Maggie's brother and writer) and directors, Margaret Davis and Michael Fuller. The approach to the material varies — from the traditional cabaret music and lyrics by Brecht, Bert, Dennis, and a first-rate song "Whores in the Songs about Whores" by Nick Enright to dramatic monologues (biographies, really) telling the real stories of real girls in real trouble and of a society which keeps them there.

There is no pretension, a touch of hard work and style in the work of Cole and Lyons. The show lacked a little jazz, lacked the intimacy of club contact and atmosphere and made itself a little badly at times. But it also made its point, carried a laugh and a tear and pleased a good many patrons. There should be more of it.



Tim Robertson (Lawrence) and Marilyn Allen (Franks) in STC's *Upside Down*. Photo David White.

THEATRE/VIC



STATE REP
RE-DANCE
SPUNNER

Lacking divinity

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

by Colin Duckworth

Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene O'Neill. Melbourne Theatre Company in the Athenaeum, Melbourne. Vic. Part One opened 28 January 1982. Part Two 4 February 1982.

Director: Michael Hasketh. Designer: Tanya McCallin. Music: George Greyling. Lighting: John de la Torre.

Cast: Seth Bodsworth, Frederick Penning, Anna Ames and Christopher David Rosenbaum. Larissa Ames, Anna Phoenix, Miriam, Juliana Allen, Larissa Williams, Sally McKeenly, Ned, Miles, Sally Cahill, Captain Peter, John, Parula, Frank, Christine, Margaret, Pat Bishop, Captain John de la Torre, Rod Mulhearn, Margaret, General Eric, Margaret, John Lee, Emma, Rosine, Remondine Gibson, Mrs. John, Helen McMillan, Joseph Boyden, Stuart, Frank, Thora, Mrs. B.D., Michael Edgar, Gordon, Joseph, Mike, Douglas, Neddy, Eric, Margaret, John, Howard, Anne, Emily, Michael Edgar, Ian, Michael, Douglas, Neddy, Joe, John, Stuart, Frank. (Professions)

It was a relief to read Eric Bentley's comment (with particular reference to *Mourning Becomes Electra*) that O'Neill seems profound and turns out on further inspection to be silly, as it is indeed very

difficult to forgive O'Neill for treating the Electra myth as a melodramatic bourgeois drama. Laudable though his aim was, to create a modern type of tragedy, he succeeded it by retaining the straightforward classical analogy while at the same time omitting the basic element of any such analogy: the Gods. A mixture of naive Freudianism and Zolaesque genetic determinism is no substitute for the awesome mechanism of divine retribution.

An enlightening comparison would be, not with the *Electra* of Giraudoux and Sartre (who both retained the Gods but reduced their nature to a similar attempt to create Man-centred tragedy), but with Tony Harrison's remarkable adaptation of Racine, *Phaedra's Story*. He chooses a setting contemporary with that of *Mourning Becomes Electra* but British India gives him the opportunity to retain the essential divine dimension, as Mermabab (Phaedra) says,

India, you see it all,
watching the haughty stoop, the
mighty fall.
Your gods possess dark persons no
man can float.

But for this supernatural element, Phaedra Mermabab would have become just an overwrought, demented woman. This is precisely what O'Neill makes Clytemnestra. Christine to him must be said that Pat Bishop, even with lines like "Forsake me, no more cowardly romantic scruples!" which sound as though a Japanese had translated them from the Russian, remained stubbornly suburban in this role, which demands a subtle blend of evil, glamour and utterly ruthless menace in order to raise her behaviour above that

required for inclusion in *Trash*.

O'Neill's theory of modern tragedy, then, and his conception of the characters, has a profound effect on performance, and that is our concern here. Part One is an attractive text from the actors' point of view. Even Sally McKeenly, whose Electra Larissa developed into a characterisation of great depth and power in Part Two, was reduced to the hostile exterior of a Berkeley campus student in Part One. It is in the second part (Acts IV and V of *The Heavens and The Heavens*) that both she and Eric Orwin are allowed to become authentic creatives, released from the pseudo-classical trappings of Part One.

After the galleys and letters has granted the dramatic highlights of Part One (and not only at the Young Persons' evening, caused by the disparity between the modernity of the characters and the burden of mythical overtones they were expected to bear, the cast must have found Part Two rather less stimulating. Here there were some splendid scenes and gripping, credible drama. Rod Mulhearn's Brian, John Howard's Eric, Patrick Frost's Peter and Sally Cahill's Hazel, were able to create the kind of flow, rapport and tension that one would expect under Michael Hasketh's direction.

Much credit for the visual success of the production must go to Tanya McCallin, for her spare, stylised, unornamented, but flexible and impressionist act, which rolled as vast walls back and forth swiftly and easily for the interior and exterior scenes — leaving too narrow a space for the latter scenes, but nevertheless most pleasing.



John Lee (Eric), Margaret, Sally McKeenly (Larissa) and Pat Bishop (Christine) in the MTC's *Mourning Becomes Electra*

One more voice to the general cheer

MAN FROM MURKINUP

by Suzanne Spanner

The Man from Mulknap by Dorothy Hewett, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Melbourne. Opened February 11, 1981.

Director: Judith Alexander, Designer: Anna Fennell, Music composed by Elizabeth Riley, Musical Staging: Jim Latham, Musical Director: Graham Clarke, Lighting Designer: David Lewis.

Cast: Jack Harry, Timothy, Chris Orchard, Polly, Patricia Trench, Al, Tim, Victor Quinn, Miss Cherry, Heather, The Broken Tunes, Steve Simpson, Matt, Clemmie, Heather, Martin, Edward, John Perkins, Beverly Dunn, Eric, Zolt, Perkins, Anthony Martins, Mary, Maudie, Mary, Kathleen, Carol, Maudie, Mary, Maudie, The Finkler, John Bowman (Professor).

The Man from Mulknap was commemorated for the sesquicentennial celebrations of and promoted in Perth last year. By the end of this year it will have been produced in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, in an uncondemned progress from the West to the East. It has already been hailed as Hewett's best play and must be ranked alongside *The Doll* and *Stretch of the Imaginative* as an Australian classic. After seeing the MTC production, and almost in spite of it, I can only add one more voice to the general cheer.

From all accounts the Perth production under Hewett's guidance and with Nora Markham and Richard Tulloch in the lead roles has been definitive, so far, and certainly the Melbourne production presented no challenge even to hearing the other Australian playwright can do as skillfully as such a store of language and reference and from lyric poetry to local slang and move between Dylan Thomas and Shakespeare by way of *The Aspidochelone*, encompassing vaudeville and tragedy on the way, let alone end up with a popular and accessible play.

In the past Hewett has freely acknowledged her problems with the structure of her plays, but in *The Man from Mulknap* she has solved the structure by an apt borrowing of the tried and true shape of the well made and well worn. Again she has been quoted as saying that in each work she has sought the appropriate form. *The Man from Mulknap* in its recreation of an innocent Australia on the edge of experience, is highly suited to the conventional comic form in which it is cast. By the simple Shakespearean comic device of splitting the play into two parallel worlds and the characters into their alter egos, she is able to not only deal with the extremes of beauty and darkness, which have always attracted her, but also resolve



Chris Orchard (Duck) and Polly Quinn (Polly) in the MTC's *Man from Mulknap*.

the philosophical contradictions and reduce a simple situation.

I left when watching the play that the prodigal daughter had come home to celebrate a place loved in the past, and that she had chosen the part of that place to inhabit, because it was the only resolvable place. Thus at many levels the play meets Hewitt's journey home, at the same time as a stolen Australian's inevitable progress from moral innocence to ethical complexity and the pain that it brings. By the end of the play *Makropulos*, through two of its sons, has been to war and returned changed, but the representations have only just begun to be felt by the community and so it is still (but only just) possible for the people to join together in the dance around the mystery.

The harvest of war has been reaped, but only the sowing will tell of all that was sown. If the play has a loving sense of place and region it also has a loving sense of theatre and particularly the social conditions in which particular popular forms grow, flourish and die. In this sense the play does for popular theatre what *King Lear* did for popular Australian cinema: reminds us of how much we have lost, and equally why we had to lose it. Both works show a way forward by showing so clearly where we have been.

Given that the play invites a reading on at least three levels and suggests many more, it is remarkable as the director and the actors that the complexities at the heart of its apparent simplicity are found and explored. It is also a remarkably appealing and touching piece, so almost no matter what you did an audience would come with you. In this production it seemed that the line of least resistance and the easiest effect was chosen to be the detriment of the richness that could have been revealed. Only in Beverley Dunn's seemingly intelligent and caring recreation of Mrs. Peters, the grocer's wife and romanticised cousin, was it possible to see what might have been the depths of the other characters had they been so generously interpreted.

Certainly this production was entertaining, but the limitations of the approach made many of the darker scenes uncomfortably melodramatic, whereas more subtle treatment could have perceived the shadows in the light and the brilliance of the dark. The very fact that Hewitt had required such clear polemics should have freed the director to shade and reflect the space between *Makropulos* is no *Camelot* and even things that weren't always pleasant. It survives on the edge of a vast desert protected only by a flimsy white paper fence and the brooding threat of racial and sexual guilt is only held at bay

for so long. Judith Alexander seemed to have decided that it was "right" and "theatrical" and so found these disquieting strains as dissonances from the "real" show.

Vapid fantasies of personal crises

FOUR FRIENDS

by Cathy Peske

Four Friends by Graham Summers. La Marm Theatre, Melbourne. Opened February 16 1991.
Director: Rex Jones. Lighting: Janet Dunne.
Cost: Sheila. Narrator's Monody: Ferdy. John Graham, Sean, David Keystone, Peter, Michael Milford. (Fringe)

Graham Summers' *Serge for Four Friends* is a depressing and deflating affair which suffers most from an exaggerated preoccupation with what are disconcertingly and totally referred to as interpersonal realities. These tend to be located somewhere outside the individual but within the nexus of a relationship — like so many fuses in an electrical circuit. From time to time, in *Four Friends* they are blown, but mostly they just smolder away in an ambience of stress and disharmony.

His "Friends" in fact are a divorced husband and wife, the ex-husband's boyfriend, and one of the ex-husband's boyfriend's favourite male co-HSC students.

It could have been heavy stuff. Instead, the script is riddled with emotional cliché, in cliché clumsy in transmission from stress point to stress point, and, despite the intention of what are doubtless well-meaning programme notes, manages to paint a picture of human relations which is both horrifying and impossibly disconcerting about the path it charts towards its end.

version of personal liberation.

The play opens with Sheila — alone in her flat and about to prepare the annual dinner for herself and her ex-husband in celebration of their divorce. The chicken — which the character *Iphigeneia*, comes in for a fair bit of her nervous, hysterical "feed", as does her mother who makes the mistake of phoning her to suggest that her lingering infatuation with Ferdy (ex-husband) is probably deeply pathological. In the end, Sheila cuts the chicken out of her custom clock and refuses to attend Ferdy — whose third entry has been fairly rapidly succeeded by a heavy goodbye.

At two thirds over to Ferdy's flat which he shares with Sean, a constant player, we go through of boom and Peter, who Sean has just re-discovered at a disco-ball somewhere. Ferdy now discovers a fair bit of aggression at what he terms the "meat market" on the couch, which later, according to us, is involved even though on this occasion and finally exits with a light step and a bottle of champagne.

Finally, all four characters get together. Sheila, who, it transpires, is an aspiring journalist, takes on her notepad, various Achilles heels are subjected and everyone gets drunk. The curtain comes down on Sheila making an hysterical phone call to her Greek boyfriend.

Director Rex Jones seems to have insisted upon a clinically stylised interpretation of all this particularly in the case of Sheila who appears to be patronised in a world of cynicism and limited rhetoric. Indeed it is only via David Keystone's Sean, that the play manages to transmit any passion or theatrical energy beyond the floodlights.

For most of the time, *Four Friends* is just content to waver between the bottle and some fairly vapid banalism about the collective management of personal crisis.



David Keystone and Michael Milford in La Marm Theatre's *Four Friends*

THEATRE/WA



STAFF REP
JOHN GIBSON

A recycled radio play

by Margot Lake

Duff by Alan Burt. Role in the Wall Theatre Ensemble, WA. Opened 12 February 1984.
Director: Jon Ewing. Designer: William Duff.
Cast: Duff, Vic Hawkins, Janet Kelly, Sandra Blair.
Wall: Berna Davis, Simon Colin Borgognon, Corbin Van Horne, Billy Rod Hall, Frank Geoff Cable, Liz Duff (Rehearsal Room).
(A Profile review)

There are certain things one might reasonably expect from a play "especially commissioned" for a festival. Excitation, perhaps, something to stimulate controversy, striking dramatic or poetic qualities — something memorable, at any rate. What one does not expect is a recycled radio play that has none of these qualities.

Alex Burt's *Duff* in the Festival at Perth is a dud, and no amount of frantic galloping by the hardworking cast across the cramped set of the hole in the Wall Theatre will persuade us that it is a lively farce with "overtones" the director, Jon Ewing claims to be "read, if we care to".

There's a narrative, played by Vic Hawkins with breathless eagerness to show what a lively vital character he is. Lighting cunningly separates the confessional scenes (taken from the action scenes tonight), and somewhere early on there are corsets, suggesting yet another dimension, but this device is later forgotten about.

The storyline is about a man who has bought himself a novel to live in, and is plagued by unwanted guests. He has also temporarily lost a disaffected wife. He gets rid of the former and retrieves the latter. What could be simpler?

It is a mistake to assume that just because there are loads of recognisable current clichés in the dialogue this makes it satire, just as it is a mistake to imagine that a farcical situation is enough without a plot full of a few good twists and turns and surprises.

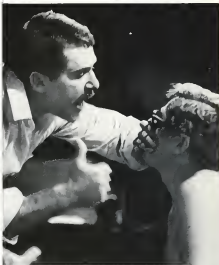
Once the characters have been introduced the play has nowhere to go and a

fairly unmotivated line of analysis/identity doesn't help a lot.

The characters have their comic moments. Liz Horne and Rod Hall as a couple of "new class" housewives from Adelaide are probably the funniest inventions. The girl awkwardly broods over the contradictions of being a liberated female and being lovingly turned on by a man she believes to be a dog, and her boyfriend goes to work with soap and duster while the spinach boils. They are an endearing pair and all but steal the show. Top acting honours must go to Geoff Cable, the representative of the past generation (old class) who while sipping his drink, thoughts and all, sitting in front of the telly, brings to life that dearly beloved character Frank, long-lost.

Berna Davis starts a good deal of energy as Matt (Duff) while Sally Sander manages rather nicely as Janet, the female interest, to suggest amused wickedness. Colin Borgognon is Simon, an exasperating comic-care Englishman, and does as well as can be expected with this sort of thing, while Rehearsal Room is conspicuously wasted in the tiny part of Liz, the errand wife.

It is an ironic reflection on the relative levels of impact that the play coming closest to the "Festival criteria" suggested above is a foreign language play comparatively to only a fraction of the audience — *The Liberation of Slaves*, produced by the Magnet Theatre Company, had to extend its season after the news got around that here was a truly remarkable theatrical experience.



Berna Davis and Colin Borgognon in the Role in *The Wall's Duff*

Company strength

TRELAWNEY OF THE WELLS MERCHANT OF VENICE

by Colin O'Brien

Treasures of the Wells by Arthur Wing Pinero. The Old Vic Company at His Majesty's Theatre Perth WA. Opened February 28, 1981.

Director: Timothy West, Designer: Peter Black, Lighting: Keith Edmondson, Stage Manager: Trevor Ingman.

Cast: Lionel Hampton, Yvonne Caskett, Lynne Miller, Peter Biddle, Neil McCull, Ron Wyse, Robert Lindsay, John Butler, Jo Wyse, John Baskshire, Felicity Dooly, Bill Fraser, George Anderson, David Shepherson, Peter Corbett, Richard Clifford, Patrick Marley, Derek Saxe.

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

Opened February 15, 1981.

Director: Michael Blackden, Designer: Adrian Page, Lighting: Brian Harris, Music: Alan Lomax, Stage Manager: Trevor Ingman.

Cast: Peter Marinker, Stephen Jean, Neil McCull, Richard Clifford, Patrick Marley, David Shepherson, Priscilla Scales, Jane Wolfe, Peter Adams, Timothy West, Lynne Miller, John Baskshire, Ron Wyse, Derek Saxe, Lionel Hampton, Felicity Dooly, Sarah Greenbank (Professor).

Treasures of the Wells and The Liberation of Shylock proved to be the two theatrical winners of the 1981 Festival of Perth, and they made an interesting contrast in style.

Shylock is a thoroughly twentieth-century

offering, it could not have produced *Scarsdale* or *Heckle*. The raw emotion and seemingly loose episodic narrative made subtle control and sophisticated dramaturgy. In contrast the Old Vic Theatre Company's *Professor* is a tribute to a long tradition of British theatre. I am not suggesting that it is confined, nineteenth-century theatre like so many Gilbert and Sullivan productions, on the contrary, it combines awareness of tradition with a willingness to be innovative, the hallmark of the best theatre found in Britain.

With excellent ensemble acting the Company convey a sense of nineteenth-century theatre without patronising it. The feeling is celebratory without being either overjoyed or too reserved. The performance deftly brings out Pinero's emotion with the velocity and overblown rhetoric which characterised the theatre of his time. Pinero employed a cunning device to make the natural style he advocated stand out against the posturing he saw all about him. He made his central character actors, who, as we know have a tendency to act out their lives with the same overblown performance they employ onstage. Pinero has thus actually criticised the failure of the theatrical values he knew by having his characters behave in "real life" as they do in the theatre. He also presents the stifling border of Victorian and the class life in contrast to the vigorous if vulgar life of the actors.

Pinero's mixture of affection, and

anymore with the theatre is focussed in the figure of an indifferent actor and struggling playwright, Tom Wrench. I can only describe Robert Lindsay's performance in this role as brilliant. His alternance of awkwardness, swift thinking, stammering and hesitation were perfectly timed, reminiscent of Anthony Hopkins in the television version of *War and Peace*. Lynne Miller conveyed both sides of the desperately difficult character of Rose Trelawney, showing the mixture of self-control and warmth which (like Iago) sit well characteristics many in the position. The Company is strong down to the smallest part, and much of the credit for a beautifully paced and nicely focused production must go to the director, Timothy West.

Mr West also earns high praise for his *Shylock* in the Company's other offering *The Merchant of Venice*. He settles for neither a Paganistic stage Jew nor the forerunner of a hedonistic victim, but lets the ambiguities which Shakespeare wrote into the character remain. Priscilla Scales gave us a witty and likable rather than poisonous Portia, and avoided the bossiness which can emerge from what is, after all, one of Shakespeare's less engaging heroines.

Again the Company showed its strength down to even minor parts. An excellent example was Lionel Hampton's Duke of Venice, a rich-voiced grained-port English nobleman. *Shylock* and *Professor* will continue to be enjoyed for a long time.



The Old Vic's *Treasures of the Wells*. Photo: Nobby Clark

no doubt as to whose side *The Law* was on.

This production was less successful than *Trevelyan* partly because it lacked the same clarity of purpose and direction. It had a slightly dated, fiftieths feel about its style. The choice of the eighteenth century as a setting did not seem to contribute anything or in any way illuminate the play's meaning. The sets and costumes were pleasant to look at, but seemed gratuitous.

The original cast of *Trevelyan* has come to Australia but the exigencies of touring have meant that some substitutions have been made in *The Merchant*. This perhaps accounts for the sense of a still unsettled performance. Nevertheless, both productions fully vindicate the Festival directors' decision to invite the Old Vic Theatre Company to come to Perth.

Success of spectacle and performance

FAUST WINGS

by Cliff Gilman

Produced by Christopher Marlowe, Western Australian Theatre Company at Regent Theatre, Perth, W.A. Opened February 7 1981.

Director: Peter Wilson, Designer: Beverly Campbell-Jackson, Stage Manager: Ian Stewart, Lighting: John Thompson.

Cast: Faust: Tony Nicholls with Eileen Heslin, Marlowe: Neeldene, Margot McCarthy, Green: Anthony, Bruce McKean, Doctor: Christine, Christopher Saunders, Craig Collier, Elmore: Susan, Jean Davies, Adam: Sam, Anna: Susan, Helen: Deborah, Sarah: Karen, Christopher: Warren, Doctor: Mackay. (Professional)

Wilson is Artistic Advisor. The Actor's Company at 90 George St, Perth, W.A. Opened February 11 1981. Director and Designer: Sam Campbell-Gubbin, Stage Manager: Christine Peck, Lighting Designer: Robin McEneaney.

Cast: Emily: Jenny McNaught, Amy: Belita Williams, Doctor: Paul English and Michael Chapman, Nurse: Francesa Mathew and Maddy Wessman, Billy: Robert Pardy, Mr. Brewster: Ray Richardson, Mrs. Van Horn: Maddy Wessman. (Professional)

The West Australian Theatre Company's Festival offering, an adaptation of Marlowe's classic *Dr Faustus* for puppets, was one of the most unusual of the theatre productions among a group distinguished by its range and variety.

Director Peter Wilson has a long history of involvement with puppet theatre, and following a successful period as Director-in-Residence at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in 1978 was invited to devise a puppet production for the 1981 Festival. This gave him the opportunity to

fulfill an idea he had been nursing for a decade, the performance in the idiom of puppet theatre of one of the archetypal tragic dramas in the western literary tradition.

Designer Beverly Campbell-Jackson created a cast of "characters", ranging from traditional rod puppets to stylized giant figures operated from within by human cast members which were a constant delight to the eye. Moreover, the art



Peter Wilson, creator of *Faust*.

proved a marvel of mechanical ingenuity, with multiple traps allowing for surprise (and magical) entrances and exits, and a point de resistance in the form of *Faust's* conjuring pentagon which became, lit with numerous flashing lights and belching vast quantities of smoke, Hell-Mouth itself.

But, as Aristotle long ago recognised, spectacle ranks as the lowest, in terms of its contribution to the maximal dramatic experience, of the six dramatic elements, and the puppet version of *Dr Faustus* went a long way toward proving his point. Despite the elaborate routines, the highly skilled manipulation of the pair of rod puppets who sustained the apocalyptic dilemma and conflict in *Faustus* (played in human form by Tony Nicholls) and a veritable barrage of exploding flash-pots, clouds of smoke, and dragons and monsters unleashed from Hell-Mouth, the production lacked any really dramatic cohesion, seeming instead to lurch from one carefully prepared and skilfully executed "special effect" to another.

As an attempt to assume and tap the dramatic power of one of the archetypal

myths of Western man, Wilson's *Faust* must be counted a failure. However, as an attempt to combine the ancient arts of puppetry and magic in a context of visual spectacle aided by all the mechanical resources of the modern stage, it was an enormous success and one hopes the first of a good many more such innovative and daring experiments in the form of theatre.

Inevitably in a very different sense was the Festival offering of the newly formed Actor's Company. Repet's play *Wings* is essentially one long intense monologue, delivered by a stroke victim from within a consciousness intact, but only gradually becoming aware of what has happened to her and of the extent to which she has been deprived of her powers of communication. This monologue is very cleverly contrasted with parallel sequences in which the blind faith of her condition emerges through the attempts of hospital staff firstly to diagnose the extent of the brain-damage suffered and then to begin the long and difficult (given the degree of scientific ignorance which still surrounds the relation between brain structure and speech functional process) process of rehabilitation. It is a masterful piece of writing on a subject both inherently difficult and little explored.

The Actor's Company rose to the challenges offered by the script. Director Campbell-Dobbin elicited from a largely inexperienced and some marvellously fluent and disciplined ensemble playing, as well as a couple of sharp little cameos (notably Paul English as a harassed but basically sympathetic medical man, and Ray Richardson as a cheerful Brooklyn Jewish stroke victim undergoing speech therapy). Campbell-Dobbin also provided for his players a set design which was both visually striking and dramatically efficient.

The production was, however, and quite properly, dominated by Jenny McNaught as the protagonist, Emily Stilton. She performed what was an extremely demanding and difficult role, involving long passages of lyrical, hours of "word-salad" nonsense, and periods of extended final more matching taped voice-over, with a sensitivity, skill and authority truly remarkable. I do hope that *Wings* played on the whole no better because than that on the night on which I saw it, not only because of the worth of both the play and the production as a whole, but because a performance of the quality given by Ms. McNaught is all too rare an event in the theatre in Perth these days.

Wings was, without doubt, one of the surprises of this year's Festival. Such an auspicious beginning bodes well for the future success of the fledgling Actor's Company, which may indeed be the catalytic flip the Perth theatre scene has long needed.

BOOKS



by John
McCullum

The Last New Wave

A D Hope once wrote that it can take a long time for a young country to build up strong mature artistic traditions of its own, but that when it comes the change is 'sudden, brilliant and permanent'. That's exactly what has happened in the last decade in Australia in the theatre and in film. The definitive book on the theatre of this period has yet to be written, but David Stratton's *The Last New Wave* on the film revival will surely stand for a long time as one of the best Australian film books. Eschewing the glossy, pastoral presentation of some film books Stratton provides a highly detailed account of the growth of what is now one of the world's most promising film industries.

The book is divided into chapters on leading directors, with additional sections on 'one-shots', producers, genre films, film festivals and programmers for the development of the industry. Within these sections it takes a film by film approach, but in his running commentary on the films Stratton manages to give a clear and elegantly written account of the politics of the industry, its artistic and commercial achievements and the role of the reviewers. To the layman it is a fascinating insight into the workings of the sometimes incomprehensible industry and to those familiar with the theatre of the 70's it provides many interesting parallels.

Not the least of these is the shameful role of reviewers. Australian reviewers, of theatre and film, have conformed to the 70's as among the most uncomprehending, insensitive and therefore destructive in the world. They have probably done more than any other single group to frustrate the endeavours of theatre and film workers, and have, in spite of their much vaunted role as representatives of the public, done much to limit the public's potential enjoyment of good films and plays. This is demonstrably true of the theatre and

Stratton, alien with considerable restraint, shows it clearly to be true of the film industry. Possibly a mature critical climate of opinion is the last part of a cultural tradition to develop — perhaps we must look forward to it in the 80's.

In spite of the hindrance such as this the film industry has come a long way. As Stratton says, who would have thought in 1969 that Australians went to make well over 100 feature films before 1980 and that in 1979 Australian films would be screening in some 40 countries. The commercial failures at the end of the decade, which scored some of the big money, make it now all the more important that we don't suddenly let off support. Stratton also argues convincingly, that 'last-Pacific' films made with a too self-conscious eye to

the American market, will not only lead to an artistic decline, but cannot even be a successful solution to the industry's commercial problems. He cites the example of the British film industry, saved in the early 70's by 'last-African' lowest common international denominator attitudes.

The Last New Wave is a densely packed book, written with great knowledge not only of the Australian industry but of world cinema. Assuming (as a layman I only can) it to be substantially accurate it is a book of great importance to those interested in theatre as well as film. When someone writes as good a book on theatre then maybe we will have our mature critical climate and we can begin to counter the influence of all those reviewers.

All you want to know about the Australian film industry

by Elizabeth Riddell

Australian Film, 1960-1977, Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Film Institute, \$75 and \$36.20 to members of the AFI.

Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, who put together *Australian Film* started on this visible task, with two collaborators who later dropped out because of other commitments, ten years ago. It is easy to see why it took so long — comprehensiveness is the word for it — because as well as providing a list of feature films it offers intelligent, well-written introductions to seven filmic periods as well as the essential facts about each film, set out chronologically. Not all the material is available on early films, who worked the cameras, designed the costumes and in the set is lost in the mists of time. After the Second World War cast and crew came easier to hand, although up until the twenties and the revival of the film industry there is nothing like the detail now available on the technical side.

It is, of course, a reference book, but it opens a rewarding afternoon browsing through its 488 pages and 488 listed films, the first of which is *Soldiers of the Cross*, produced by the Salvation Army in 1903 and directed by the Maxon Joseph Perry and Herbie Booth and the last *Festive Commerce* produced by the Australian International Film Corporation and directed by Eric Rasm (Colin Eggleston).

Odd bits of information come to light

there was a Congress with the Royal Commission into the industry in 1927 which lasted a year, its main recommendations for a quota system coming to nothing. Curiously, surprise, 1911 was the biggest production year for Australian film, and is still unequalled, when the theatrical family of *The Sign of the Cross* the Ardri-Gore they kept it in the family, two Tatts produced and four acted, the Red Cross produced a film called *Cupid Camouflaged* in 1918 to raise money and used society ladies and gents as performers. Mayo invested in Australian film-making for the first time in 1940, putting money into Charles Chauvel's 40,000 *Bombardier* which made a star of Chips Rafferty, Jack Thomson appears for the first time in a cast but in the Goldwyn production, *The Jack Frost* Peking described as a 'Turkey', Rasmid played in Tony Richardson's *Red Earth*.

Australian Film, 1960-1977 in fact tells you all you want to know, and some things that only a very few people could want to know, about the Australian film industry, whose ups and downs are paradoxically apparent. It has struggled on often enough, and again fallen down. With a bit of luck it will now stay up.

The authors had to decide what was a feature film and what wasn't and they have had to omit documentaries, which they regret. Perhaps another book will cover that extraordinarily prolific and talented part of the industry.

ACT

THEATRE

ARTS CENTRE (464767)

Australian Theatre Workshop: *Mapper*
Days by Samuel Beckett, director, Ralph
Wilson. To Apr 4

Australian National Playwrights Con-
ference Apr 15-May 10

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORK- SHOP

Chorus In Love by Howard Breton,
director, Warwick Baxter

The Salvo Mkhalebi by Howard Breton,
director, Alison Summers Apr 21-26
The Killing Of Sam George directed or Joan
Arthur. Apr 8-18

CANBERRA THEATRE (467600)

Canberra Philharmonic Society
Aus Me Aus by Cole Porter, director,
Eileen Gray, musical director, Keith
Hepburn Apr 2-4, 7-11

DANCE

CANBERRA THEATRE (467600)

Sydney Dance Company presents *An
Evening* Apr 22-23

PLAYHOUSE (464688)

One Extra Dance Theatre Apr 9-11
For artists contact Janet Neale on
464769

NSW

THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (4378611)

School tours: *The Book Road Theatre*
Company, drama for infants and primary,
metropolitan area until April 10

Adult Tours: *The Landlady*, 103 Group,
Riverina from April 5

AXIS ARTISTS (969 8203)

Axis Fan House Support Club
Ramsay Inn, Pacific Highway, Crows
Nest

The Billie Davis Tonight Show by Tony
Harvey and Malcolm Forsyth, directed by
Peter Meredith, with music by Gary
Smith, with Greg Bopper, Amanda
George, Christine Briggs, Steven Burke,

Tony Harvey. Throughout April
BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (367211)
The Mervin by Ruth and Augustus Gertz,
directed by Darren Hancox, with Victoria
Ball, Diane Jeffrey, Pige Donelson,
Richard Hill Until April 23

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (329 8877)
I Chango To Be In Passion by Neil Simon,
directed by Hayer Gordon. Commences
April 2

**FLAKE STRAINS BULL NBUH
THEATRE RESTAURANT (358 1888)**

The Good Old, Bad Old Days with Noel
Brophy, Barbara Wyndle, Garth Meade,
Neil Bryant and Helen I crane, directed by
George Gordon. Throughout April

GENESIAN THEATRE (553641)
The Play by Ludovic Fodder, directed by
Colleen Clifford. Until April 11

Waiting In The Wings by Noel Coward,
directed by Elizabeth Lloyd. Commences
April 15

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (282 3411)
Avon by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim
Rice, directed by Harold Prince, with
Jennifer Murphy, Peter Cennell, John
O'May and Tony Alvarez. Continuing
**HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COM-
PANY (34 3294)**

Mari Barrie by David Edgar, director,
Aarne Noorve, with Natalie Rafe. April 1st
No Noses, No Park Drive by Bob
Berhart, director, Aarne Noorve. April 12-
May 2

**CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
(465703)**

The Mervin. Plans based on the Cheff
Mystery Cycle, directed by Robert Page,
designed by David Wood, music by
Margaret Lloyd with John Doyle. David
From on. Opens April 22

KIRKILLI PUB THEATRE (82 1405)
Elizabeth Hest, Wilson's Point

The Private Eye Show by Perry Quetton
and Paul Chubb, music by Adrian
Morgan, lyrics by P P Cranney, directed
by Perry Quetton, with Zoe Herriman, Jane
Hamilton, Patrick Ward, Bill Young and
Michael Ferguson. Throughout April

**MARKIN STREET THEATRE
(4663166)**

Overide Edge by Richard Harris, directed
by Richard Nicholas. Throughout April

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (477 8553)
Pardon our Privates directed by Peggy
Monaghan, with Ross Fraser, Maggie
Stuart and Lee Young. Throughout April

NEW THEATRE (319 3403)
Polka Nova by Kevin McCaughy, directed
by Marie Armstrong. Throughout April

NEMROD THEATRE (444 5083)
Upstairs, The Three Sisters by Anton
Chekhov, directed by Aubrey Miller,
with John Bell, Michele Fawcett, Barry
Oro, Drew Forsyth, and Cathy Downes.
Until April 26

Demetrius Death of an American by
Dario Fo, directed by Brent McGregor,

with George Whaley, Deborah Kennedy,
John McEwen and Tony Taylor. Until
April 5

Acid in One Season by Doron Clark,
directed by Fay McKelton, with Marion
Harris, Carolyn Skinner, and Heather
Mishell. Commences April 11. Late Night
Late Night Show. Los Trus Ringbarkes
from Melbourne's Flying Theatre Cafe
Until April 5

**NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF
(257 1200)**

Thermost, a new production for primary
schools and *The Deafened World of Jasper
Lantern* for secondary schools, both
directed by Ian Watson, with David
London, Colin Allen, Bill Eggerking and
Rosemary Leno. Visual communication
workshops by Nola Collett. Throughout
April

**PHILLIP STREET THEATRE (232-
1234400)**

Scarlet by Barry Gasky, with Max
Giles. Commences April 1

Q THEATRE (447 21 5750)
The Warhorse by John Upson. Penrith
until April 18, Orange April 21-23 and
Barragans from April 24

REGENT THEATRE (3647985)
Barry Humphries. Commences April 23

**REVERINA TRUCKING CO
(24935 2032)**

Contact theatre for details
THE ROCKS PLAYERS (9462251)

Plan with a Tiger by Davis Lester,
directed by Amanda Field. Commences
April 10

SEYMOUR CENTRE (4624555)
York Theatre

Too Good, from the works of Tom
Lefors. Commences April 1

**SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE (468 9482)**

Free drama workshop on weekends
Shopfront Theatre Touring Company
touring metropolitan and country areas
with *The Tole Pig*, directed by Don
Munn and *The Third World Horror
Show* directed by Michael Webb
Youth Theatre Showcase Shopfront
Touring company productions April 2, 4,
10, 11

**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
(20348)**

Macbeth by William Shakespeare, directed
by William Gaskill, with Kate Fitzpatrick,
John Gaden, Alexander Hay, Nona
Haleburn, George Sparck and Colin
Friel. Throughout April

THEATRE SOUTH (38 2923)
Twasling North by David Williamson,
director, Gordon Storey, with Brian Hale
and Fay Montgomery. To April 4

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)
Whose Life Is It Anon? by Brian Clark,
directed by Brian Hewitt-Jones, with
Robert Colby, Annette Andie, Dee
Fazio, Elaine Lee, David Foster, David

Nathan, Dorothy Alison, Philip Ross, Keith Lee, Lesley Smith and Fred Strick. Throughout April

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (20588)
Opera Theatre, SOH

Comes by Roland Petit. *Entrusted* by Gerald Argento and *Steel* written by Serge Lifar. Until April 7

Onyx by John Cranko. Commences April 10

For entries contact Carole Long on 929 8315/357 1300

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (362044)

Major *Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw, director, Jennifer Radbourne, designer, Graham McKenna. To May 2

LA BOITE THEATRE (361622)

Colonel Esperance by Walter Cooper, director Eileen Batten. To April 11

Orangutan by Trevor Griffiths, director, Jeremy Ridgman. From April 24

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (232 3861)

SGIO: *On A Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams, director, Rodney Fisher, designer, Graham MacLean. To April 11

DANCE

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (228 1252)

SGIO: *The Ice Maiden* choreography, Harold Collins, designer, Graham MacLean.

The Night Is A Sorcerer choreography, Rex Reid, designer, James Aldridge

Overturn choreography, Jacqui Carroll and Michael Pearce

For entries contact Don Bachelder on 336 9311

SA

THEATRE

Arts Theatre. *And The Big Men Fly* by Alan Hoggood. Apr 6-11.

ASIAN PLAYERS

Sheridan Theatre. *Touki Sen* by Hal Porter. Apr 8-10

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE

Park Theatre 2. *A Banquet of Ropes* by Alison Tannery. Apr 8-10

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING

GROUP

Little Theatre. *The Two-headed Calf* by Stanislav Wakowicz. Apr 13-15

BASEMENT THEATRE BAND

Red Shed, Corporal St. Apr 8-25

CDRE THEATRE COMPANY

Corroboree by Alan Lyons. Apr 9-19.

DARWIN THEATRE GROUP

Little Theatre. *Myfather's Carri Ph* by Simon Hopkinson. Apr 2-11.

FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST

Space Theatre. *Death Of Onda* by Kenneth Ross. Apr 2-25

POOLS GALLERY

Hernade Town Hall. *Standard Operating Procedure*. Apr 7-15

FOOTLIGHTS CLUB

Festival Club, Adelaide Democratic Club

Footlighter. *Greenest Man*. Apr 8-15

LA BOITE

Theatre 62. *Yaboo* by Sean Men. Apr. 10, 11, 14-16

LA MAMA THEATRE

Summer Of The 7th Day by Ray Lawler, plus *Fallopia* by Jim Daly. Apr 6-10

LITTLE PATCH THEATRE

Cardew. *The Green Australian*. 'What' by the company. From April 4

LOOSE LEAF THEATRE

Julie by Nigel Triffin, plus *Wall Street Sars* by Rob Bath. Throughout Apr.

MAGPIE TIE

Playhouse T84. April 11.

MICKS OMNIBUS PLAYERS

Cardew. *Stables World*. *Gambouren* in *Bureau*. Acts by Regis Pulvers. Apr 6-10

MIXED COMPANY

Cardew. Ballroom. *Acrop's Fables* and *The Melbourne Show*. by the company. Apr 11-12

PANORAMA THEATRE GROUP

Sheridan Theatre. *Farm Food* by PMG. Apr 2-7

PHAB PLAYERS

Walkerville Town Hall. *Lawyer's School*. Apr 11-14

PIGS ON WINGS

Improvements by the company. Apr 9-12

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE

Theatre 62. *On Off Work* by Enid O'Neill, and *Crossed Shop* by Richard Feltham. Apr 2-9

Q THEATRE

Up The Track by Betty Quin. Apr 8-15

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY

AMP Theatre. *Such Is Life* adapted by Peter Barclay and Ken McCall. Apr 7-15

SHOPFRONT THEATRE

The Sea Factory. *Without Women* and

The Fuses by Enid Bray. Apr 6-10
STATE THEATRE COMPANY (513351)

The Playhouse. *Acropolis* by Ariane Taylor and David Allen. Apr 4-23

TROUPE

Suburban Mysteries by Keith Gallach. Apr 14-May 2

THE WAREHOUSE

The Standish Room, *Cabaret* by Jean Gunn, Bill Rough and Lyn Shallopont. Apr 2-11

Sleep Never Rains. Apr 13-15

WE COMPANY

Sheridan Theatre. *X-Provance* by the company. Apr 2-5

XITH HOUR COMPANY

Street Theatre. Throughout April

For all bookings contact the Australian Drama Festival on 267 5011, 267 5209

For entries contact Edwin Bell on 267 5608

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY

(348815)

Eggs by Peter Shaffer, director, Don Gay, with John Phelps, Hamd Alger,

Norran Le Norton, Derek Marzani, Alan Harvey Barnes. Apr 14. Hobart. Apr 8-11. Launceston. May 1-2

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (234259)

Teasing Robert and East and West 1944

Teasing Shakespeare, *The Last Arrow* and *The Girl A Name*. Throughout Apr

THEATRE ROYAL (346266)

Contact theatre for details

For entries contact Anne Campbell on (049) 67 4478

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (3412824)

Melinda by the Balmora Players. Apr 2-11

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying with the Cheltenham Light Opera Company. Apr 14-May 9

ARENA THEATRE (34 9467)

Teasing secondary schools. *Melinda* devised by Coventry Bolgrade TIE Team.

White Man's Mission devised by Popular Theatre Troupe
 Drama Workshops
 ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA
 (3294859)

Touring secondary schools. *MyAd* with Keith Houslow and Tony Gould
Pussu's Ad with Philip Asile and Paul Williamson

Touring primary and kindergarten. Soundscapes with the Lightning Creek Trio
 AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (3471133)
 From Theatre

Touring primary and kindergarten. Soundscapes with the Lightning Creek Trio
 AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (3471133)
 From Theatre

The Two Headed Calf by Stanislaw Wokosinski, translated and adapted by Roger Feltner, with Maggie Miller, William Glath and Howard Stanley To April 11

Back Theatre. *Sister* by Jay Wiedersheim, with the APG Ensemble. To Apr 22

COMEDY CAFE RESTAURANT
 (4892888)

Downstairs. *Team* with Mary Kennedy, Susan Blackburn, Geoff Brooks, and Rod Quenlock, guested. Andrew Quinn Throughout April

Honour And Blame with Anne Gatten, Dave Gray, Alan Furdland and Sue Simon

COMEDY THEATRE (4623236)

The 1st Flaming Gun Song by Neil Simon, with John Warren and Jackie Warren To May 9

DRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE
 (3473449)

Touring Schools. *2D or Not 2D* with the Boomerang Street TIE Team

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (4196226)

Stop Cos and Fines 37 with Tony Richards, Simon Thorpe, and Tom Edwards Throughout April

LA MAMA (3476885)

Prisoner and Swimmers Supper Show by Ian Nash, director, Brad Forney Apr 2-5

Jack and Jill written and directed by Sarah Wootenall. Apr 8-9

An Event by Lloyd Jones. Apr 24-May 3

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4196226)

Murder's Little Horror Show devised and directed by Nigel Trofine To April 18

Mick Connors' All Stars Review director, Terry O'Connell From Apr 24

Updates shows changing weekly
 MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
 (8544008)

Athenaeum Theatre. *Pris McGinn* and the *Donatello* by Keith Mitchell, director, John Sumner, designer, Anne Fraser From Apr 1

Russell Street Theatre. *Ensemble* by Ron Elsha, director, Bruce Miles, designer, Richard Pina, with Fredrick Parlow, Gary Down and Roger Oakley From Apr 15

Athenaeum 2. *Bartholomew* by Carol Bauman and Ned Sherrin, director, Ross Rudge,

designer, Christopher Smith, with David Macconnell, and Michael Edgar
 MILL THEATRE COMPANY (222318)
 Mill Nights, Run Of The Milland Teenage Workshops

The Woman Who Died For Her Husband by Euripides, director, James McCaughey, with the Mill Team

Geelong. Performing Arts Centre. *The Bear* by Anton Chekhov, director Barbara Curwen. Apr 1-11

MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (317615)

Back To Dream Street with the Performing Ensemble

School For Clowns at the Orange Festival to Apr 3

Clown Ensemble at Tamara to Apr 4

MUSHROOM TROUPE (3767364)

Touring upper primary and lower secondary. *Flying Heroes* devised by Mushroom Troupe, director, Alison Richards Throughout April

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY
 (634888)

The Universal Theatre. *The Club* by Errol Bay, Kenneth production, director, Neil Arnfield, designer, Eamon O'Arcy Throughout April

Downstairs. *I Sent A Letter To My Love* by Bernard Rubens, director, Malcolm Robinson, designer, John Buckam From Apr 29

Upstairs. *Blinder's Story* by Darren Clarke, director, Rex Hearn, designer, Tracy Watt From Apr 3

THEATRE IN THE COMMUNITY
 Four's Company (341755)

Touring. HSC. *Lanterns* Programme: *Breath, Sweat, Tears* and *The Girls* Throughout April

CROSSWINDS (623364)

Touring upper secondary. *Getting The Best Of It*, director, Tony Clarke

THEATRE WORKS (2834444)

Touring Eastern Suburbs. *The Go Anywhere* (Mickie Aronoff) Show by Theatre Works Throughout Apr

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE
 (3767034)

Touring. *Gerb* Throughout April

The Players by Phil Sumner and Ian Sherrin, director, Ray Mooney Throughout April

Just A Simple Make director, Phil Thomson, and Ian McDonald, with Ian Sherrin, Phil Sumner and Greg Sanderson Essendon Civic Centre. *Hot Nights Out* and *The Proposal*

MAJOR ANATELON COMPANIES

Boss Theatre Group (7621882)

Clayton Theatre Group (3761802)

Hendelberg Rep (483262)

Melburn Theatre Company (2118020)

Pumpkin Theatre (426337)

Williamstown Little Theatre (5284267)

1512 Theatre (798634)

OPERA

PALACE THEATRE (310651)

Manon Lescaut by Puccini, with the Australian Opera Company Apr 18, 19, 21

Tales of Hoffmann by Offenbach. Apr 26

PRINCESS THEATRE (6222911)

Barber of Seville by Rossini, with the Australian Opera Company Apr 9-25

Kaiser Kabanos by Janacek. Apr 30

For those who cannot Count *Kramer* on 26/3/88

WA

THEATRE

HOLE IN THE WALL (3812401)

A Shadow Box by Michael Christie, director, Edgar Metcalfe. Apr 1-25

NATIONAL THEATRE (3253506)

Pat Jones by John O'Hara and Rogers and Hart, director, Thomas Clarke To Apr 28

NATIONAL THEATRE TIE

On Tour to metropolitan schools. *Brady Bunch*, *JW Be In This* by Ann Harvey and *Sam Ligger* by David Young

UNIVERSITY THEATRES

Dolphin Theatre. *Dark The Moon* by Howard Richardson and William Berns To Apr 11

For those who cannot Count *Archer* on 26/3/88

PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE

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From *Headlines* by James Wilford. *Headlines* was always first on the spot with a good story and was award from Australia for reporting it AND

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Across

- 1 Sailor we had followed by journalists seems offended (8)
 - 5 Outbreak of pest meat? (8)
 - 6 Lapsizes enough to provide a forecast (4,6)
 - 10 Love noted Spot (4)
 - 11 Let me not to the _____ of true needs? (Shakespeare) (8)
 - 12 About job.... do it again differently (4)
 - 13 Damage, means the body more (4)
 - 15 ←What a move in the abductor? (8)
 - 16 Stephen's friend will run off badly (8)
 - 19 Cleaver time? (4)
 - 21 Sounds like a sweet nut (8)
 - 23 Reconsidering partly improved, it can be a spark (8)
 - 25 Find edging on part of the wicker basket (8)
 - 26 Kennedy's group? (10)
 - 27 Quatry can be rather when about two characters (8)
 - 28 Described with seen by the animal's fur (8)
- #### Down
- 2 Graduate enters run drink in colony (3)
 - 3 Herdman in the bed (8)
 - 4 Church leaves foreign currency for plays (4)
 - 5 Post job is serious, some how, giving an also-synonymous view (12)
 - 6 First person to yell got the desert (2,5)
 - 7 One points about the city (4)
 - 8 Middle with one Darwinian quote kept before (8)
 - 14 Librarian gets stuck in bog in North Africa (8)
 - 16 Walk out's in before being bothered and bewildered? (8)
 - 17 Monocraft's too-time filling (8)
 - 18 Groups like snakes, perhaps (8)
 - 22 Customary gear (4)
 - 24 No use of now but that might be like Hamlet's (Shakespeare) (10)

The first correct entry to be drawn on
April 25 will receive one year's free
subscription to TA

